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**Indigeneity and Mestizaje in Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Hummingbird's
Daughter* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead***

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

James H. Cox

Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández

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by

Zachary Robert Hernández, B.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2014

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my supervisor Dr. James Cox, and my reader Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, for their patience and helping me put this thesis together. Thank you to Dr. Luis Urrieta for all of the support and encouragement. Thank you to all my great friends. A big thanks to Griselda Guevara and José Cano for sacrificing their time to proofread, edit, and comment on my work. And to my cohort mates, Mario Castro and Jose Centeno for letting me bounce my ideas off of them. Thank you to the CMAS family!

Lastly, I want to thank my family. Mom, Dad, Zane, Zeth, Alex – Thank you. I love you.

Abstract

Indigeneity and Mestizaje in Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*

Zachary Robert Hernández, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: James H. Cox

In an attempt to narrow a perceived gap between two literary fields, this thesis provides a comparative analysis of Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Humminbird's Daughter*, and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. I explore and critique the ways in which Luis Alberto Urrea mobilizes *mestizaje* and Chicana/o nationalist rhetoric. I argue that *mestizaje* stems from colonial representations that inscribe indigenous people into a narrative of erasure. Furthermore, I address Leslie Marmon Silko's critique of *mestizaje* within *Almanac of the Dead*.

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Preface

“Aztlán is now the name of our Mestizo nation, existing to the north of Mexico, within the borders of the United States. Chicano poets sing of it, and their flor y canto points toward a new yet ancient way of life and social order, toward new yet very ancient gods.”

- Luis Valdez

The evening before sessions began for the 2014 National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, a member of the Diné (Navajo) Tribe gave the opening blessing. The reception began with general introductions and a welcome from the NACCS Chair, before he handed the microphone to the guest speaker. Dressed in blue jeans and a T-shirt, the Diné man addressed the Chicana/o, Mexican-American, and Latina/o spectators and announced that we were all standing in Ute country. In English he briefly summarized a Ute history and focused on the interconnectedness of people, the land, and the sacredness of this world. He ended his blessing in his native language. His blessing expressed reverence for the Ute nation and acknowledged a people with a rich history and connection to the land we stood on. Moreover, he chose to offer a sign of respect to the Ute people and recognize their resilience and survival.

When he ended his prayer, a man from the University of Utah thanked him and took the microphone. He thanked the NACCS committee for finally bringing the NACCS conference to Salt Lake City and commented on the amazing Chicana/o

community there. “This land is sacred,” he said, “just walk around and you can feel it.” Smiling, he looked at everyone and proudly announced, “This is Aztlán!”

This brief vignette demonstrates how Chicana/o nationalists’ rhetoric works to erase local histories and establish a collective Chicana/o consciousness, despite the presence of natives. For Chicana/os, the idea of Aztlán creates a sense of entitlement in the United States, where they have historically been disenfranchised. Sheila Marie Contreras writes that

“[t]he language of indigenism and the themes of Chicana/o indigenous ancestry are thus but one set of iconic signifiers deployed within [Chicana/o] movement rhetoric. Articulated within a matrix of recovered Mesoamerican mythology, Chicana/o indigenism mobilizes the story of the Aztec migration from the ancestral homeland of Aztlán, the cosmogonic narrative of *el Quinto Sol*/the Fifth Sun” (71-72).

Evocative of the United States’ nationalistic propaganda of Manifest Destiny, Chicana/o intellectuals adopted and fervently embraced the Aztec migration narrative to link “ancient Indigenous travelers to present-day mestizo communities in the United States” as if 500 plus years of history did not occur (Contreras 72).

Writers such as Alberto Alurista, Armando Rendón, and Luis Valdez were instrumental in instituting the discourse of Aztlán and *mestizaje* into the Chicana/o movement in order to suggest a rightful ownership to the U.S.’s Southwest. Yet, in what ways are stories that Chicana/o nationalism tells, like the legend of Aztlán, complicit in the subjugation of other brown bodies? Moreover, how do the ways in which we choose

to remember, forget, or silence the past within a consolidated nationalist imagination hide the ways in which power and hegemony work? In the NACCS scenario depicted above, the allure of Aztlán erased a more local Ute history, and having a Diné speaker further obscures the fact that the contemporary Navajo nation sits on Ute land as well. Furthermore, the desire to imagine a romanticized history of belonging ignores a history of colonialism and violence and hides aspects of that history such as land thefts by Mestizo and Anglo settlers.

Ignoring a painful history of patriarchal and racialized sexual violence, Chicana/o nationalist discourses celebrate *mestizaje* and imagine the burgeoning realm of Aztlán in the United States' Southwest as a “mestizo nation.” In his introduction to *Aztlán: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*, Luis Valdez writes, “Miscegenation went joyously wild, creating the many shapes, sizes, and hues of La Raza. But the predominant strain of the mestizaje remained Indio. By the turn of the nineteenth century, most of the people in Mexico were mestizos with a great deal of Indian blood” (xv). Calling the race mixing that took place, “joyously wild,” Luis Valdez sanitizes and celebrates a history of sexual violence in order to arrive at his romantic Chicana/o subject. Racializing indigeneity, Valdez ignores centuries of tribal histories and European and mestizo conquest in order to construct an unbroken Aztec ancestry.

Appropriating Vasconcelos's *La Raza Cosmica* and a romanticized Aztec lineage, Chicana/os discursively refashioned colonial representations of the ideal indigenous subject—the hybrid mestizo. As another representation in a long history of indigenous (mis)representation, *mestizaje* and Aztlán continued and continues the erasure of tribal

histories in the United States. In the example above, Chicana/o and Diné – when one takes into account that parts of the Navajo nation now reside on Ute land – subjectivity and history completely silence Ute voices. Because discourses and images matter and because historical erasure attributes to and helps justify violence, my thesis attempts to address some of the racist and sexist representations within Chicana/o *indigenismo*.

Though my thesis project had multiple origins, it arose in part out of a perceived gap in communication between two literary traditions: Chicana/o literature and Native American literature. How is it that two seemingly different ethnic groups that inhabit some of the very same places and experience some of the very same social and economic marginalization, produce literatures that often get read in isolation? Are the issues that the two literatures address so starkly dissimilar? How does the positionality of each group influence the direction they take in representational strategies of the same events?

With the history of *mestizaje* in Mexican and Chicana/o nationalism in mind, my thesis offers readings of Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of The Dead*. In this thesis I argue that Urrea's text problematically appropriates *mestizaje*, and by doing so, produces a narrative that inscribes indigenous people into a narrative of erasure. Then, I pinpoint a counter-critique of *mestizaje* in Silko's novel. I contend that Silko's narrative locates *mestizaje* in a larger system of global capital that must be subverted. In my readings of Urrea's and Silko's texts, I explore how these two specific texts differ in their approaches to *mestizaje* and indigeneity. *The Hummingbird's Daughter* neutralizes the political implications of Teresa Urrea's narrative, and minimalizes the genocidal policies of the Mexican

government toward the indigenous peoples of northwest Mexico. On the other hand, *Almanac* seriously addresses the historical context it seeks to emulate and centers Yaqui subjectivities that work to undermine state power.

Introduction: The Yaquis, Mayos, and Teresa Urrea

Though my thesis is not technically speaking a historical project, it is imperative to start with a brief introduction to Yaqui history and culture for a multiple of reasons. For one, a general familiarity with the Cahita speaking people in southwest Sonora and their cultural history is essential to my readings of Urrea's *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. Secondly, my thesis takes issue with the ways in which nation states and nationalist discourse often ignore state violence and perpetuate racial, class, and gender hierarchies through the manipulation of images and history. Thus, to disregard the history of southwest Sonora generally, and its indigenous history more specifically, would be to reiterate nationalistic discourse's tendency to erase and sanitize history.

Tracing Mexican state sponsored violence against the Yaqui in *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries*, Nicole Guidotti-Hernández writes that “[t]he interlaced history of three nations – the United States, the Yaqui (Yoeme), and Mexico – tells a story of power, for the power to narrate or to choose not to narrate is in itself an extreme act of control, a way to maintain a selective symbolic order. Keeping records of genocide locked away in archives, not accessible to the average citizen, is a national act of historical repression” (Guidotti-Hernández 177). Guidotti-Hernández's work is fitting here because she draws attention to the fact that “there has been sporadic dialogue at best and utter silence at worst about the Yaqui in U.S., Chicana/o, and Mexican historiography and cultural studies” (Guidotti-Hernández

177). She makes suggestive connections between state control, “a selective symbolic order,” and the act of narrating. Social hierarchies implemented by colonialism are maintained, in part, through the manipulation of the historical imagination. This relationship suggests a significant connection between the substance of a society’s historical and literary discourse and a society’s social order. The appropriation and reproduction of heteronormative, patriarchal, and racist tropes in Chicana/o nationalist discourse repeatedly ignored the Yaqui, and other indigenous peoples, in their conception of the borderlands. History and literature work hand in hand to establish racial, gendered, and sexualized hierarchies. Moreover, literary discourses can contribute to the subjugation of brown bodies and reproduce the “selective symbolic order” through a systematic process of selective remembering and representations. Thus, an examination of literary texts that incorporate Native subjects must examine not only the ways in which the authors represent Native characters, but also how the texts interact within their respective historical contexts.

This brief overview of Yaqui history is not meant to be an authoritative or exhaustive statement on Yaqui political, cultural, and economic existence. Nor is it meant to imply that the Yaqui are a homogenous group of people. The overview is important because both novels are partially set within Yaqui territory and contain Yaqui characters. The majority of events in *The Hummingbird’s Daughter* take place in Cabora in the Mexican state of Sonora. According to historian Alfronso Torúa Cienfuegos, Tomás Urrea’s ranch at Cabora was within Yaqui territory (Torúa 2006). Additionally, the novel’s central protagonist Teresa Urrea is Tehueco, a Cahita speaking people who,

according to anthropologist José Luis Moctezuma, resided in the northern part of Sinaloa (Moctezuma 2001). Likewise, two of *Almanac*'s central characters are Yaqui, and several scenes take place within the Rio Yaqui. Zeta and Lecha are born within Yaqui territory to a mestizo mother and a white father. Moreover their grandmothers name, Yoeme (*Yo'eme*), literally means "The People" and is the name the Yaqui use to refer to themselves, their neighbors the Mayo, and other Cahita speaking people like the Tehuecos, Sinaloas, and Zuaques (Moctezuma 2001). Consequently I draw from historians and anthropologists who have done extensive research on Yaqui history in order to establish a working knowledge of some of the main historical events that are most pertinent to the novels.

THE CAHITA SPEAKING NATIONS OF NORTHWEST MEXICO

The Yaqui are an indigenous nation that resides along the Rio Yaqui in southwest Sonora, Mexico. In 2000 there were 15,000 Yaqui living in the Rio Yaqui (Padilla Ramos, "Los ocho pueblos"). However, over the years warfare and genocide within Yaqui territory has resulted in many Yaquis migrating to Arizona. According to Padilla Ramos, when you take into account the number of Yaquis living in Hermosillo, Sonora, and in Arizona, the number is closer to 40,000 (Padilla Ramos, "Los ocho pueblos"). The Yaquis share many cultural, spiritual, and linguistic practices with their neighbors, the Mayos, who live along the Rio Mayo. Moctezuma writes that, "Yaquis y mayos son grupos indígenas que hablan lenguas emparentadas de manera muy cercana. Estas variedades también son llamadas cahita cuando son consideradas como una sola lengua.

Ambas pertenecen al grupo taracahita, rama sonoreense de la familia yutoazteca” (18). In addition to a common language, the two nations share a similar history, and until the end of the nineteenth century almost always fought as allies to maintain their autonomy as distinct nations. In concurrence, Edward Spicer argues that once the Jesuits had begun to influence both groups of people, “it is hardly possible to separate Yaqui and Mayo cultural development” (Spicer 16).

When the Spanish first arrived in Northeast Mexico, there were many Cahita speaking people living in what is modern day state of Sonora and Sinaloa; the Yaqui were the most northern of these people (Moctezuma 40). The Spanish referred to each of the groups they found by the names of the river they inhabited (Moctezuma 2001). However, the Yaquis refer to themselves as *Yoeme*, and the Mayos and Tehueco call themselves *Yoremem*; “terminus muy relacionados que significan ‘la gente’” (Moctezuma 41). For anyone that is not “The People,” the Yaquis and Mayos use the term *yori*, and have a special term reserved for Yaquis “que han perdido algo de su identidad *yoeme*, queriendo actuar como *yoris* o blancos, éste es *torocoyori*” (Padilla Ramos, *Progreso y libertad* 24). Moctezuma contends that the Yaqui and Mayo “fueron los únicos grupos cahitas que sobrevivieron a la época colonial,” and that it is difficult to isolate exactly why the Tehuecos, Sinaloas, and Zuaques “desaparecido de las crónicas” and lost their identity and languages (Moctezuma 43-44). Most historians and anthropologists agree with Moctezuma that disease, Spanish violence, and assimilation into Yaqui, Mayo, or expanding Mexican Mestizo populations caused the Tehuecos to disappear.

THE JESUIT'S INFLUENCE AND THE EIGHT VILLAGES

The Jesuits strongly influenced the colonial period for the Yaqui. When the Jesuits entered Yaqui territory in the beginning of the seventeenth century, they succeeding in organizing the Yaqui into eight villages (Tórim, Cócorit, Bácum, Pótam, Vícam, Belem, Ráhum and Huírivis), and significantly changed their social economy (Spicer 1980; Moctezuma 2001). According to Edward Spicer, “one result of Jesuit-Yaqui collaboration was the growth of a new religion among the Yaquis” (Spicer 60). The new religion fused Roman Catholicism traditions and rituals into the Yaqui’s existing religious practices. This blending of Pre-Columbian rituals with Catholic tradition reveals a lot about the relationship the Yaquis had with the missionaries. Edward Spicer contends:

The essential feature was a give-and-take on the part of both Europeans and Yaquis. The Yaquis were not proceeding like dominated people; they were choosing and setting conditions. Similarly the Spaniards were choosing among possible approaches one which matched the Yaqui approach, and more over they, like the Yaquis, were demonstrating a readiness to change, to adapt to the developing situation. (Spicer 16)

Though Jesuit missionaries in many ways came to govern much of Yaqui life, the relationship between the two is not easily reduced to a simple domination narrative.

Interestingly, the Yaqui were aware of Jesuit activity with the Mayo and were curious about how the Jesuit’s social institutions could benefit Yaqui society. As part of a peace treaty with the Europeans, the Yaquis invited the Jesuits into their territory on the

agreement that the Jesuits would come without military assistance. Thus, though the Jesuits restructured Yaqui social institutions, it is vital to note that the Jesuits were only able to “succeed” because the Yaquis welcomed the changes (Spicer 1980). For instance, though the eight villages were in large part European institutions, they are central to Yaqui identity, and like the land they inhabit, sacred to the Yaqui people. Padilla Ramos posits that the land the Yaquis populate signifies much more to the Yaquis than to the white and Mestizo population. She writes:

Para los primeros [Yaqui] el valle es antes que nada su casa, y con ello nos referimos no sólo al lugar donde se habita, sino al espacio geográfico que permite el desarrollo de la etnia como tal. Para los segundos [yoris] el valle fue y es considerado como un territorio susceptible de explotación agroganadera, una pieza clave en el desarrollo económico de estos territorios. (Paddilla Ramos, “Los ocho pueblos” 1)

The conflicting worldviews between the Yaquis and the Mexican government marks a tension between two nations that escalated into genocide at the end of the eighteenth century.

With the establishment of the eight villages the *huya aniya* (natural world) and *pweplum*, “the part of the universe proper to the activities of men as distinct now from the animals and other beings of the *huya aniya*,” came to define the Yaqui worldview (Spicer 64). Furthermore, the spiritual “dimension of *huya aniya* was sometimes spoken of as the *yo aniya*, which is to say, ‘the ancient and honorable realm,’ that is, the domain or world of respected powers...was

everywhere in the huya aniya” (Spicer 64). The Yaqui valley and the Rio Yaqui are hallowed ground for the Yaquis. Yaquis believe that God gave the land to them; it is where their ancestors reside, and their identity as a people is intimately linked to their place within it (Spicer 1980). Guidotti-Hernández contends, moreover, that “[t]he Yaqui valley is of historical importance to them because they see the land as sacred” (Guidotti-Hernández 180). Not only is the Yaqui river valley essential to a Yaqui sense of self, but the Yaqui view their territory in many ways as an autonomous nation. Thus, “the Mexican- and U.S.-backed encroachment in the Yaqui valley during the 1870s and 1880s was perceived as a declaration of war” (Guidotti-Hernández 180).

THE PORFIRIATO, GENOCIDE, AND INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Mexican government under the leadership of president Porfirio Díaz implemented a genocidal war against the Yaquis. Porfirio Díaz wanted to transition Mexico into a modern and more unified nation state, much like the United States. As a part of this transition, the Díaz regime implemented liberal economic policies and opened up land to foreign (mostly American) investors (Padilla Ramos, *Yucatan, fin del sueño*). The Porfiriato (as the Díaz dictatorship is often referred to) lasted more than thirty years and to the outside world appeared to bring peace, unity, and modernization to Mexico (Padilla Ramos, *Yucatan, fin del sueño*). However, for the Yaquis and Mayos the Porfiriato meant the appropriate and

privatization of their land and a slave like existence as labor for wealthy *hacendado* and mine owners. Moctezuma writes;

“[p]ara los yaquis y mayos éste fue un periodo más difícil, ya que para los primeros significó la época negra que provocó su diáspora por el territorio nacional y por el suroeste de Estados Unidos, mientras que para los segundos representó el principio de su incorporación al modelo nacional, al perder totalmente sus formas de organización y ver que la gran mayoría de sus tierras iban a parar a manos de los hacendados mestizos.

(Moctezuma 2001)

The Díaz regimes’ plan for economic progress and a modern Mexico required the government to use violent force against the communities and individuals that stood in the way of “development” (Padilla Ramos, *Yucatan, fin del sueño*).

For the Yaquis and Mayos, Díaz’s policies brought American venture capitalists into their territories. The Mexican government made deals with U.S. investors that basically sold Yaqui land to white capitalists looking to make huge profits in Mexico. These venture capitalists sought to build railroads across Yaqui and Mayo territory that violated their autonomy. Obviously the Yaqui and Mayo nations did not take well to unsanctioned invasion of their land. Thus the Díaz government “deemed it necessary to eliminate any obstacles that would prevent such development in the state of Sonora” (Guidotti-Hernández 180). When the indigenous nations resisted the continuous white incursions into their land, the Díaz government implemented a military strategy of imprisonment,

enslavement, and deportation that in reality amounted to genocide. Seasoned in dealing with Europeans, the Yaquis and Mayos resisted on many fronts including “an extended war against the Mexican state and those who sought to control and confiscate traditional Yaqui lands” led by Jose Maria Leyva, Cajeme (Guidotti-Hernández 182).

The Yaquis have taken up arms several times to defend their lands throughout history, and there are several important Yaqui leaders. This is especially true in the later part of the nineteenth century, when the Yaquis had several military leaders in their fight for land: Cajeme, Tetabiate, and Luis Bule are some of the most prominent names. Jose Maria Leyva, Cajeme, is perhaps the most well known of these leaders, and one of the most successful in terms of his effectiveness against the Mexican government. The facts surrounding Cajeme’s life and death are disputed by historians and shrouded by history. In many instances legend fills in the gap. According to Padilla-Ramos, for instance, even though Cajeme was not captured until April of 1887, there were reports from the San Francisco Bulletin that he had been injured and captured since January (“Cajeme” 2014). Moreover, when Mexican forces finally captured Cajeme on April twenty-second, the reports of his arrest were not surprisingly widely inconsistent (“Cajeme” 2014).

The governor of Sonora appointed Cajeme alcalde mayor of the Yaqui and Mayo communities in 1874. Cajeme gained favor of the governor during his time in the Mexican military. Cajeme fought multiple times against the Yaquis and “took part in one of the bloodiest Mexican military campaigns against his own Yaqui people from late 1867 through 1868”; in this sense he was a *torocoyori*, a traitor (Guidotti-Hernández

184). However, because of Cajeme's training and knowledge of the *yori* world, he was able to organize Yaquis and Mayos into a formidable military power when he "cambia su actitud" in 1875 (Moctezuma 52). It is imperative to note that Cajeme did not start a revolution from scratch; "[t]he Mexican government and U.S.-based investors did not count on Cajeme rekindling a long history of maintaining Yaqui independence" (Guidotti-Hernández 185). But in a sense Cajeme was able to "dar unidad y cohesion a los yaquis y cuerpo a su ancestral instinto autonomista" (Padilla Ramos, *Yucatan, fin del sueño* 20), and he was an intimidating threat to the Díaz vision of a united and industrialized Mexico. Cajeme announced that the Yaqui were a sovereign people, and they would fight for "los derechos sobre sus territorios y la libertad para continuar con sus formas tradicionales de organización" (Moctezuma 53). He led 12 years of resistance until his assassination in 1887. After Cajeme's capture and execution in 1887, many of the Mayo "habían acompañado a los Yaquis en la Guerra, pero después la muerte de Cajeme y antes del alzamiento de Tetabiate, se pacificaron" (Padilla Ramos, *Yucatan, fin del sueño* 24). The Mayos, and some Yaqui, "turned in a direction other than military resistance to the hacendados, namely, to messianism" (Spicer 149). Juan Tetabiate picked up military leadership for the Yaqui, and continued the war in a much less centralized, more guerilla warfare like war (Padilla Ramos, *Yucatan, fin del sueño*).

TERESA URREA, "LA REINA DE LOS YAQUIS"

Teresa Urrea, "La Santa de Cabora," was born in October 1873 in Ocoroni Sinaloa to a Tehueco mother and a wealthy hacienda owner whose family owned huge

tracts of land in Sonora and Sinaloa. Raquel Padilla Ramos asserts that Teresa was, “una mujer con un historial complicado, con participaciones políticas y curaciones milagrosas; de allí la beatificación popular” (Padilla Ramos, *Progreso y libertad* 25). According to many historians Cayetana (Teresa’s mother) was raped by Tomás; at the time Cayetana was no more than fourteen years old. Alfonso Torúa contends that at the age of twelve Teresa went to live with her father in Cabora (which was located within Yaqui territory) after the death of her mother (Torúa 23). However, Cayetana’s absence is contested, and many historians claim that Cayetana abandoned Teresa. Shortly after Teresa arrived in Cabora, she suffered an epileptic attack and was unconscious for some time (Enriquez 2014). When she awoke, she began healing local peasants and voicing her displeasure against Porfirio Díaz’s dehumanizing policies against the Yaquis and Mayos, indigenous oppression, and the corruption of the local clergy (Enriquez 2014). According to Torúa, Teresa blamed the Díaz government for the poor conditions most of the people of Mexico lived in and “pronunciaba en contra despojo de tierras y el genocidio cometido contra indios Yaquis y Mayos” (Torúa 30).

The indigenous people of Sonora saw Teresa as a saint and a political leader. Like Cajeme, the Mexican government and religious authorities feared her ability to captivate and unite the indigenous people of Sonora. The Mexican government saw her as a threat to their economic and genocidal plans in the Rio Yaqui and Rio Mayo. According to Dora Elvia Enríquez Licón, Teresa Urrea’s movement was in many ways a precursor to the Mexican Revolution (Enríquez 2014). Moreover, in *Frontera en llamas*, Alfonso Torúa Cienfuegos traces the

Yaqui's connection to the various revolutionary movements leading up to and during the Mexican revolution. He argues that Teresa was an essential player in a growing movement of dissent all across Mexico. He writes that Teresa was,

parte de un grupo que planea el derrocamiento del regimen y que tiene su momento culminante en el año de 1896, cuando una partida de doscientos hombres, en su mayoría Yaquis, trata de tomar varios puntos fronterizos, entre los que se encuentra la población de Nogales, Sonora (Torúa 16).

Teresa's father was an outspoken opponent of the Díaz regime, and Lauro Aguirre, who ran a newspaper and had many revolutionary connections in Texas, was a close associate of hers. In this aspect Teresa represents a connection between the Yaqui and the revolutionary forces. Teresa Urrea was an unwavering challenger to the economic policies that privatized Yaqui land and aimed to create a racialized working class (Enríquez 2014). The Díaz's policies had already succeeded in appropriating Opata and Pima land in Northeast Sonora by 1880, but ran into a major roadblock in the unified military force of the Yaquis and Mayos who were able to better resist *yeri* settlement in their lands under the leadership of Cajeme (Enríquez 2014).

Teresa Urrea's "reign" arose after the assassination of Cajeme, when Mayo resistance went from armed warfare to a spiritual battle. Padilla Ramos contends that the transition from Cajeme to Teresa "demuestra la necesidad de los indios por buscarla un motor a la Guerra, apaciguada después de la muerte de Cajeme (Padilla Ramos, *Yucatan, fin del sueño* 26). Thus it is clear that Teresa Urrea was a significant symbol of mobilization for the Mayos early on and the Yaquis later, and she played a significant

role in continuing the struggle against European and Mestizo intrusions into indigenous land. At the beginning of her reign, Teresa attracted many more Mayo followers than Yaquis, because the Yaquis continued their war on much more violent terms under the leadership of Tetabiate. After the death of Cajeme,

[t]he Mayos in 1890 had turned in a direction other than military resistance to the hacendados, namely, to messianism. In 1890 prophets had appeared among them, preaching the coming of a great flood which would destroy all Mexicans and return the land to its Golden Age when only Indians were present. The prophets recognized the authority of one they considered a saint, a woman named Teresa Urrea from Cabora on the Cocoraque arroyo between the Yaqui and Mayo rivers. (Spicer 149).

It was also at this moment in time that the Mexican government had more success in appropriating Mayo lands and implementing their desires on the Mayo people; “A partir de ese momento, grupos significativos de mayos comienzan a trabajar como peones en haciendas enclavadas en sus propios territorios y su autonomía se ve seriamente restringida al ser incorporados sus asentamientos de manera definitiva al sistema municipal que rige a la sociedad nacional” (Moctezuma 53). Teresa’s appearance disrupted the “social order” that the Mexican government and U.S. investors had been able to implement so far in Mayo territory. Hacienda owners and priests were anxious and threatened by the Mayo peoples absence from churches, haciendas and mines; “Mayos from all over left the haciendas where they were voluntarily or forcibly employed and went to hear the prophets preach” (Spicer 149). In 1890, Cabora saw over

two thousand people daily, a number that doubled in 1891 and exceeded ten thousand in May of 1892 (Enriquez 2014). Most of these people were Mayo and Yaqui. Teresa was more than just a figure head that the Mayo and Yaqui could rally behind. She spoke out against marriage, social inequality, and condemned the priests for taking advantage of the indigenous people (Enríquez 2014). There is no doubt that Teresa benefited greatly from the social distress that surrounded her and the privilege given to her by her father's money; perhaps she was just in the right place at the right time. Moreover, many historians contend that Teresa and Tomás took advantage of the indigenous people and made a fortune selling her brand. Yet the fact remains that Teresa was a beacon for the Mayos and Yaquis and was herself an indigenous woman – Cahita was her first language. There is no doubt that Teresa Urrea was a political player in the years preceding the Mexican Revolution.

Chapter One: ‘Every Mexican was a Diluted Indian’: Discourses of Indigenismo in Luis Urrea’s *The Hummingbird’s Daughter*

“We are Indian, blood and soul; the language and civilization are Spanish”

- Jose Vasconcelos

“La Raza Cosmica, the true American People.”

- Luis Valdez

Luis Alberto Urrea’s *The Hummingbird’s Daughter* problematically appropriates mestizaje in its (re)telling of Teresa Urrea’s story. Teresa Urrea is an important and fascinating figure in the Mexican and Mexican-American imaginary. In the novel she gains thousands of followers and becomes a powerful voice for oppressed and Native peoples. She criticizes the clergy and the Diaz regime. Yet even as she can be read as a feminist figure of indigenous resistance, the novel remains deeply embedded in Chicana/o nationalist discourses of indigenous erasure. The narrative produces and reproduces discourses that reiterate symbolic sexual violence and the myth of the Vanishing American – the idea that Native people are fated to docilely vanish from history. Moreover, *The Hummingbird’s Daughter* coopts Teresa’s narrative of indigenous survival into a story about her white father, Tomás Urrea. While there are numerous studies on the historical and legendary Teresa Urrea, a thorough examination of her multiple literary appearances is beyond the scope of the project. The aim here is to examine this specific retelling of her story and the ways in which the narrative produces and reproduces discourses that reiterate symbolic sexual violence and the Vanishing American. The novel only represents two indigenous women; Teresa and the strong

willed Huila. Yet these two healers evoke the mythical curandera, a common trope in Chicana/o literature – a literary trope far too reminiscent of the romanticized spiritual Indian of white imaginations and Chicana/o nationalists. Furthermore, Luis Urrea portrays Tomás as an innocuous and compassionate character. Yet, Teresa’s life as an indigenous girl reveals the ways in which “the sexual objectification of girls and women” in a colonized space has “its roots in a colonial history shaped by race, class, and gender inequalities” (González-López 401). Consequently, while a sizeable portion of the novel recounts the events surrounding Teresa’s training as a healer and her rise to popular sainthood, this chapter investigates Chicano and Mexican nationalism in the text, and the enduring colonial project central to the formation of the narrative.

Published in 2005, the novel chronicles the life of Teresa Urrea, popular Saint of Cabora, and covers the events from right before her birth to her deportation to the United States. Teresa was born in 1873 to a young Tehueco girl as the illegitimate child of the wealthy *hacienda* owner, Tomás Urrea. Luis Urrea based his work on twenty years of research as he aimed to unravel and tell the story of his indigenous great aunt/cousin, Teresa Urrea. Set in Mexico at the turn of the nineteenth century, the novel tells the stories of Teresa and Tomás Urrea as she goes from bastard outcast to revered healer and revolutionary insurgent. It is a story of exile both as Tomás decides to uproot the entire hacienda from the Santana Ranch near Ocoroni, Sinaloa to Cabora, Sonora in order to avoid political persecution. He does so again when Teresa is banished to the U.S. after she is deemed a heretic and a threat to the Díaz regime. The novel provides a space to

discuss race, gender, and class in relation to the production of Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina/o, and Indigenous identities.

In 1982 historian Brian Dippie published *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, the most comprehensive study on the myth of the Vanishing American. One of the most enduring colonial tropes, this tradition holds that the Tribal people of the Americas “are a vanishing race” that has “been wasting away since the day the white man arrived, diminishing in vitality and numbers until in some not too distant future, no red men will be left on the face of the earth” (xii). In other words, its lore is a discourse of extinction and a narrative of remorseful yet romanticized genocide. Dippie traces the myth’s foundation and development in the U.S. imaginary and argues that, “belief in the Vanishing American has had far-reaching ramifications. Based on what was thought to be irrefutable evidence, it became self-perpetuating,” accounting “for the Indians’ future by denying them one, and stain[ing] the tissue of policy debate with fatalism” (xii). The United States’ government expanded its burgeoning nation on the illusion of undeveloped fertile lands, endless possibility, and the dream that the stoic Indian would passively vanish. What *The Vanishing American* shows is that the desire for indigenous erasure manifests at multiple levels, including literary texts. In pursuit of economic progress the U.S. and Mexican governments forcibly removed indigenous people from their homes, while state propaganda and the U.S.’s European literary tradition discursively normalized, and helped to justify, the eradication of native peoples. For instance, according to Dippie, “some forty novels

published between 1824 and 1834” answered the “demand for a truly national literature” (21). Yet imperialist history is not unique to the United States, nor is its discourses.

In *Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature*, for example, Sheila Contreras traces representations of the Indian and *Indio* from European and Anglo-American modernist primitivism, Mexican nationalism, and Chicana/o nationalism. She argues that Chicana/o literary discourse owes its roots to the mythic narratives created by western anthropology and archaeology that placed the Aztec nation at the center of the conquest imaginary. As Europe and Europeans set out to colonize the Americas, anthropologists played a crucial role in producing narratives that justified the atrocities and injustices perpetuated against indigenous peoples. For instance, because archaeology and anthropology mythologized Pre-columbian Mesoamerica and saw contemporary Indigenous populations as primitive, they made the Indian a relic of the past. Likewise, concepts such as *mestizaje*, defined by José Vasconcelos in *La Raza Cósmica* and used in constructing Mexican national identity, helped Criollo elites justify the “occupation of Native lands” and re-inscribe a social hierarchy that maintained the oppression of indigenous peoples.

In response to the question of how to construct a post-Porfiriato national identity, Mexican intellectual, José Vasconcelos, and Mexico’s post-revolutionary government championed the idea of the cosmic race. They advertised *mestizaje* as an inclusive identity that would construct a more unified nation. However Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla argues as part of a larger discussion of Mesoamerican cultural endurance that *mestizaje* “really was, and is, ethnocide,” (24). He writes, “[b]iological

mixture was frequently the product of violence, and [native] cultural persistence had to confront or elude the most varied forms of oppression, imposition, and rejection. From this perspective, the mestizo nature of Mexico allows less simple and evasive interpretation than those suggested in the ‘racial democracy’ argument” (17). In cultural terms, *mestizaje* “carries the risk of introducing an incorrect view. It is an inappropriate way to understand nonbiological processes, such as those that occur in the culture of different groups in contact, within the context of colonial domination” (17). Nonetheless, the mestizo became the literal embodiment of how the nation was to come together; it was how Mexico, and thus Mexicans, was to be imagined and manufactured.

The Chicana/o movement appropriated this racial discourse and re-coded and reproduced it ideologically within its various cultural texts. For instance, Rodolfo Corky Gonzalez’s classic poem, “Yo Soy Joaquin,” adopts *mestizaje* as a point of resistance against the “sterilization of the soul” and “industrial giant called Progress and Anglo success” (Gonzalez 1972). Mobilizing a male-centric discourse, he further writes, “My blood is pure. / I am Aztec prince and Christian Christ” (Gonzalez 1972). Reproducing an indigenous identity constructed in blood, Gonzalez appropriates *mestizaje* to imagine the Chicana/o subject as mestizo. Furthermore, like many other Chicana/o writers, he inscribes Chicana/o subjectivity into a dichotomy where the Chicana/o is outside and against modernity. Gonzalez’s logic revolves around a stagnant Indian of the past and a romanticized Aztec descent. Likewise, Teatro Campesino appropriated Aztec and Mayan rituals for Chicana/o cultural practices. On the other hand, Gloria Anzaldúa re-appropriates the same tropes in order to deconstruct issues of race, gender, and sexuality

in the borderlands. But, as María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo argues, “mestizaje is [still] deployed to produce a biological tie with pre-Aztec Indians rather than a political tie with contemporary U.S. Native Americans or Mexcian Indians. Consequently, in this system of representation, indigenous subjectivity is once again put under erasure” (415). Gloria Anzaldúa challenges patriarchal Chicana/o nationalism. However, even as Anzaldúa re-envisions Gonzalez’s hetero-patriarchal vision of a fabled Aztec lineage, she nonetheless echoes Vasconcelos’s institutionalized *indigenismo*. Thus what Chicana/o indigenist discourse like Gonzalez’s and Anzaldúa’s does is objectify and appropriate indigeneity while disregarding current Native struggles and reinscribing a history of sexual violence.

MESTIZAJE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As *The Hummingbird’s Daughter* features Teresa, daughter of a Tehueco woman and a Basque father, it celebrates *mestizaje* and reproduces social hierarchies that position indigenous women at the lowest level of society. Apart from Teresa and Huila, moreover, the text characterizes native women as passive consumable objects, and glorifies Tomás’s consumption of brown women. For instance, midway through part two of the novel Tomás leads a nameless girl away from camp to have sex with her. Yet the language surrounding the encounter displaces and censors Tomás aggression as “the miner from Rosario, had introduced her” to him (135):

the girl, no fool either, lifted her skirts for Tomás as he knelt before her, licking his way up her thighs – brown and sweet as candy, at the same time tart and salty, musky, silken and cold in the warm air, refreshing as

the sorbet he'd licked in Culiacán back when he was a student...He pressed his lips to the mound of her, breathing her in, tasting her like a dog, as her skirts fell over his head and her fingers pulled his head tighter to her, her legs moving apart in the dark, her beauty falling around him, her greatest gift to him, this flavor, this smell, her secret. (135-136)

This exchange between Tomás and the dehumanized girl reflects a distinct class difference between the two. The novel suggests that the girl *consents* to Tomás's advances out of economic need. Yet, Tomás's privilege as the son of a wealthy *hacendado* not only gives Tomás the ability to attend school in Culiacán, but also suggests that Tomás is entitled to the girl's body. Tomás does not ask the girl her name, nor does he care to know it. He, instead, is too concerned with exploring her body and her secret. Moreover, the food imagery renders her brown body edible, docile, and passive. Her "beauty," "flavor," and "smell" invoke the image of the quintessential Indian maiden, and her exoticism lures Tomás in. Luis Urrea reduces her to consumable body parts: "sweet as candy," "tart," "sorbet." The nameless girls' body means nothing beyond what she can give to Tomás. This scene exemplifies Tomás's position in the novel, and the ways in which Luis Urrea imagines Tomás as not just a great savior, but an explorer and creator. Like Cayetana the girl is simply consumed and left behind. Yet, why?

When Cayetana disappears from the text she becomes a "necessary" sacrifice for the story and the reunion of the more appealing family – Teresa and Tomás. They are the more alluring family because they embody whiteness and exemplify *mestizaje's* success.

Narratives of *mestizaje* “[are] implicated, simply put, in the continued economic marginalization, racism, and social/cultural erasure of indigenous identities” (Urrieta 152). In “*Las Identidades También Lloran*, Identities Also Cry: Exploring the Human Side of Indigenous Latina/o Identities,” Luis Urrieta Jr. contends that even as *mestizaje* became a discourse of empowerment for Chicanas/os, it refigures a whole history of institutionalized sexual violence “in the name of” national identity construction (Urrieta 151). In this respect, the representation of indigenous bodies within Chicana/o texts demands investigation because of the ways in which imperial projects have relied, and continue to rely, on the manufacturing and manipulation of sexuality, bodies, and discourses. Teresa, for instance, is seemingly able to use her hybridity for her benefit, but the ways in which she gets positioned in the novel seem to justify Tomás’s rape of Cayetana.

Tomás and Teresa are the idyllic family because she embodies *mestizaje* in a way that becomes very empowering for her, and her character forces the novel to problematize essentialist notions of what it means to be native. Teresa has a white father and is phenotypically white, yet she always claims an indigenous identity. When Huila and Teresa seek out Manuelito, a medicine man, they request teaching from him. Manuelito looks at Teresa and replies simply “she is white” (213). Teresa replies, “I am Indian” (213). To which he responds “you’re no Indian!...what little Indian blood you have will fall out when your first month begins” (214). To this Teresa states, “I am many things...but if you need to know, I have already bled and I am still Indian!” (214). Here, the novel again locates Teresa’s indigeneity in blood and works into a logic that affirms a

Chicana/o and Mexican mestizo identity. Manuelito directly associates Teresa's Indianess to her reproductive cycle and implies that her Indian blood determines whether or not she is worthy of indigenous knowledge. Manuelito's comments seem to suggest that her positionality as a woman and her potential to reproduce have something to do with a diminishing Indianess. In addition, Manuelito invokes Teresa's gender into the conversation in order to establish a sort of gender hierarchy. He explicitly draws attention to the fact that the blood is menstrual blood sexualizes and genders her indigeneity. Still, the scene exemplifies Teresa's ability to navigate racialized and gendered representations of Native brown women. Teresa asserts and insists on her Indianess, challenging concepts of indigeneity collapsed around biology and blood.

Yet *mestizaje* does not work at so well for Cayetana. The *hacienda* system up until the Mexican Revolution preserved Indian subjugation in large part by enforcing gender roles and controlling "female sexuality through either virginity or marital chastity" (Twinam 124). According to Ann Twinam in "Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America," colonial regimes maintained and reproduced their institutions through the policing of female sexuality. The novel begins with Cayetana Chávez barely fourteen years old and pregnant with the *patron's* bastard daughter. The People of the Santana rancho busy themselves with their preparations for the Day of the Dead, while ostracizing Cayetana, the Hummingbird, to the periphery of the hacienda. The peasants and ranch-hands call her a whore, leaving her alone to drink "her coffee reboiled from yesterday's grounds and girls...lightened by thin blue milk stolen with a few quick squeezes from one of the patrón's cows" (8). Even though she carries the child

of the patrón, Tomás does not offer any assistance to her, and Cayetana is left to struggle just to maintain a bare level of sustenance. Furthermore, her pregnancy stigmatizes her and makes her an outcast. As a young girl “she had already learned that life was basically a long series of troubles,” and she wonders why everyone called her Hummingbird because “everyone knew [hummingbirds] were holy birds,” and “she had a bad reputation” (11). Reflective of Porfirio Díaz’s genocidal policies of the time, Cayetana is alone on Tomás’s *hacienda*; “her mother and father were dead, shot down in an army raid in Tehueco lands. Her aunt and uncle had been hanged in a grove of mango trees by soldiers that mistook them for fleeing Yaquis” (Urrea 11). The death of her mother and father demonstrate how state sponsored violence created a labor force. Moreover, their deaths represent how that violence left Cayetana vulnerable to sexual exploitation on one hand and dishonor from the community on the other. Her sister, the only family left to her, disowns her and offers no support – like the rest of the community, Cayetana’s sister berates her and calls her a *puta*. The insults speak to an internalized need to control Cayetana’s sexuality and honor. According to Ann Twinam though, “honor was the ethos which rationalized the existence of the colonial hierarchy...Part of honor was inherited, including the concept of *limpieza de sangre*” (Twinam 123). The elite had honor, and it was their duty to maintain that honor by protecting women’s virginity. Early in the novel Cayetana decides to leave Teresa with her sister and leave the *hacienda*. Cayetana walks alone, the baby “heavy in her arms” (47). When she finally arrives at her sister’s door, she collects herself before she knocks, and after a harsh and curt conversation in which her sister interrogates her by asking,

“Who are you going to see now? Another Yori?” Cayetana leaves Teresa and disappears from the novel (49). Even though the novel suggests that Cayetana’s sister has many illegitimate children herself, it seems that Cayetana’s action is so disgraceful due to the fact that Teresa’s father is a *yori*. Cayetana’s sister’s accusations imply that she sees Cayetana as a traitor to “The People,” a *torocoyori*.

Additionally, the verbal abuse coming from the community and Cayetana’s sister represents the ways in which systems of racial, class, gender, and sexual inequalities get internalized and reproduced by the very people they are meant to oppress. Twinam delineates how “[w]omen who engaged in pre-marital or extra sexual relations not only lost personal reputation and honor, but could beget additional family members whose illegitimacy excluded them from family honor” (Twinam 124). The family owned a woman’s virginity. Thus a *loss* of that virginity meant shame, not to just her, but to her entire family. In other words, the anger Cayetana’s sister directs at her exemplifies the sexualized and gendered hierarchies implemented by European colonialism, and the ways in which colonial ideologies are reproduced through the regulation of the indigenous woman’s body. As another example, the priest reprimands Cayetana by making sure that she understands she is a sinner. During the pains of childbirth Cayetana attempts to confess to Huila:

“Huila – I have been bad.”

Huila snorted.

“Who hasn’t?”

“The priest said I was a sinner.”

“So is he. Now rest.” (26)

Cayetana internalizes the colonial systems obsession with regulating women’s bodies to the point where she starts regulating herself.

Yet even more striking here is that Luis Urrea again makes the effort to relieve Tomás of any guilt. Tomás’s social position facilitates his access to young indigenous girls for sex. Cayetana’s subjectivity as a Tehueco woman positions her at the bottom of the social ladder. Thus the community directs blame and shame at her. Yet, the gendered and racialized social structures reproduced in the hacienda system allow Tomás to exploit the indigenous girls on the ranch consequence free. The pass given to Tomás’s *role* in Cayetana’s pregnancy represents a double standard in Mexico’s colonial society, and speaks to the ways in which power manifests itself at the intersections of class, gender, and race. According to Gloria González-López sex for procreation was “essential for the formation and stability of the gradually emerging mestizo society, and eventually, a Mexican national identity” (González-López 405). In this respect, Indigenous women became the “locus for reproduction” in which their “bodies were literally conceived as the epicenter of the nation, from which would emerge the Mestizo” (Hernández-Castillo 27). Downplaying the social conditions that facilitated Cayetana’s pregnancy becomes necessary to Mexico and Chicana/o narratives of a Mestizo nation.

Even though Tomás does not recognize Teresa as his daughter for years to come, with Cayetana gone the decision to legitimize Teresa becomes much easier for Tomás. He does not have to deal with her indigenous blood, which would be made more concrete with the presence of Cayetana. Cayetana’s departure exemplifies the ways in which

indigenous erasure historically works in Chicana/o discursive practices. At the beginning the novel centers Cayetana to authenticate Teresa's authentic indigeneity. But then fortunately for the sake of the story, Cayetana seems to just passively go away. While some may read Cayetana's choice as abandonment, I argue that she made the decision, at least in part, out of self-preservation. Cayetana is horrified when her daughter's hair starts showing signs of blonde – a color that would incriminate her even further in the community and could put her life in danger. She “had tried, at first, to pluck all the light hairs, but they spread, a weed, an incrimination, a combination of her mother's curls and the golden and auburn straight hair of Tomás. Cayetana could not imagine what might happen to her if Tomás took note of this poor bastard girl” (30). Cayetana fears Tomás and the repercussions she could face for birthing the patron's daughter. She has the burden of experiencing violence from for the result of an unequal sexual encounter. The colonization of Mexico produced the sexual objectification of the female body through ideologies of inequality and patriarchal dominance where women and children are stripped of full citizenship because they are “vulnerable, dehumanized, and objectified servants of the father” (Gonzalez-Lopez 401). Thus patriarchy justified and facilitated the rape and sexual abuse of indigenous women.

The Hummingbird's Daughter minimizes the sexual violence aimed at indigenous women. Tomas's social position suggests that even if Cayetana was not “technically speaking” raped, she did not have the social capital to deny her presiding *hacendado's* advances. The economic situation of the peasant and indigenous proletariat class under the hacienda system posit that she would, at best, be out of a *job* if she were to deny his

advances. The colonial hierarchies left women vulnerable to sexual exploitation, especially indigenous women. Despite this fact, Luis Urrea portrays Tomás as more of a spirited lover boy than a man of high status taking advantage of his social position to fulfill his sexual desires. For instance, when he meets Gabriela at Señor Cantúa's restaurant Tomás appears as a love stricken teenager, even when Señor Cantúa's helplessness underlines the situation. When Tomás sees Gabriela, he asks Señor Cantúa, "Who is that in the kitchen?" (210). Señor Cantúa tries to deflect Tomás's attention, but Tomás persists. Visibly distressed, Señor Cantúa "wipe[s] his brow with his little white towel," and replies, "[t]hat girl in the kitchen would be my daughter, Gabriela" (210). Creepily and "coincidentally" soon after, Gabriela shows up to the Urrea house for a "sleep over" with Teresa. Several pages later Gabriela shares Tomás's bed, and becomes the woman of the house. The novel indicates that Gabriela and Tomás both made the decision that she would move into the house. However, the situation represents another instance where the novel not just minimizes but celebrates Tomás's predatory impulses. Though Señor Cantúa had no routes available to stop the "taking" of Gabriela, Tomás ends up paying Señor Cantúa for Gabriela, and Luis Urrea spends the next chapter fixated on Tomás's adoration and love for Gabriela. Problematically, Tomás's pursuit of Gabriela reads more as a romantic "courtship" than another instance of Tomás exploiting the privileges patriarchy and racism has allowed him.

Tomás Urrea's role as a central and redeemable character in the novel is problematic in a sense that it reinforces the racialized and gendered representations of Indians as uncivilized, passive, and in need of saving. The fact that Tomás is allowed to

play the role of white savior not only maintains the imperial imaginary about native peoples, but it also minimizes his role as a colonizer and preserves a sterilized view of *mestizaje*. Not to mention, it also neutralizes Teresa's role as a revolutionary figure for indigenous liberation.

TERESA THE MESOAMERICAN HEALER

"little attention has been give to the place of Mexico as a site for European spiritual and cultural redemption"

- Sheila Marie Contreras

Paloma Martinez-Cruz's interpretations of the text fashion Teresa as a *hybrid* character emphasize her mythic talents and use her as a transition between the indigenous and the European. Moreover, Luis Urrea uses her narrative to exemplify the ideal Mexican. Teresa embodies literal *mestizaje*, and her light skin and hair make her beautiful. Yet, she maintains the most *desirable* traits of the archetype Indian: a supernatural connection to nature and a mysticism that eroticizes her and fetishizes the Indian. Nonetheless, Teresa is a complex character. Her subjectivity contradicts and resists easy categorization, and she often deconstructs colonial imaginations of the indigenous woman. She demands to be taught how to read and write and is a phenomenal horsewoman. She moves into the big house and dons beautiful dresses but does not concede to wearing shoes. Additionally, she constantly advocates indigenous liberation. Still, the ways Urrea positions her in the text demands a critical analysis of how her character functions to celebrate *mestizaje*, and what that means for indigenous

people – specifically, the Cahita speaking people of southern Sonora and Northern Sinaloa.

In a chapter of her book, *Women and Knowledge in Mesoamerica*, Paloma Martinez-Cruz speaks against discourses of “Mexican-as-pathogen” which “dehumanizes Latino immigrants” and creates a “climate that tolerates abuses of the immigrant labor force” (Martinez-Cruz 120). As part of her analysis, Martinez-Cruz traces “Mesoamerica wise women” within the Chicana/o literary tradition by analyzing Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima*, Ana Castillo’s *So Far from God*, and Luis Urrea’s *The Hummingbird’s Daughter*. In her readings of the novels Martinez-Cruz attempts to disrupt and dislocate racist mentalities that label Mexican immigrants as infective and dangerous to the U.S. by consolidating a framework that positions Chicana women at the center of knowledge and community production. Her analysis argues that the *curandera* is a prominent figure in “Chicano cultural production, because it contests these racist attitudes and celebrates Mesoamerican women as physicians rather than pathogens” (15). Martinez-Cruz’s chapter is useful in understanding the ways in which U.S. discourses alienate and racialized Mexican immigrants. In her book, Martinez-Cruz reads *The Hummingbird’s Daughter* as a resistance narrative against “immigration policies and [racists] border images” because it shows that “Mexican American women healers restore dignity to a maligned conception of indigenous womanhood” (15). However, reading Urrea’s novel as a resistance narrative without problematizing its conception of indigeneity, and indigenous women, is problematic. Not to mention the fact that Martinez-Cruz’s reading ignores the historical context of the novel. While the novel can offer a critique of the

“authentic” and “pure” Indian, *Hummingbird’s Daughter* and Martinez-Cruz accept Chicana/o *indigenismo* at face value.

Chicana/os appropriate Mexican nationalist discourse in order to “assert a pre-Conquest origin in the Americas” and “create a narrative of belonging” (Contreras 6). However, such imaginaries refuse to acknowledge indigenous peoples continual struggle for autonomy, and the ways in which the obsession with whiteness expresses itself, painfully, in every the day lives of colonized societies. Consequently, Chicana/o’s celebration of a fabled *mestizaje* represents a problematic construction of self that involves a violent erasure of the subaltern other. In the following passage Urrea addresses the cruelty of internalized racism, yet his discourse problematically celebrates *mestizaje*. In the opening pages of the novel, Luis Urrea asks the question, "So what were they?" (9). To which he answers,

Every Mexican was a diluted Indian, invaded by milk like the coffee in Cayetana's Cup. Afraid, after the Conquest and Inquisition, of their own brown wrappers, they colored their faces with powder, covered their skins in perfumed and European silks and American hats. Yet for all their beaver hats and their lace veils, the fine citizens of the great cities knew they had nothing that would ever match the ancient feathers of the quetzal...In Mexico City, the great and fallen Tenochtitlán, among streets and buildings constructed with the stones of the Pyramid of the Sun....

...Other Old Ones hid behind statues in the cathedrals that the Spaniards had built with the stones of their shattered temples. The smell

of sacrificial blood and copal seeped out from between the stones to mix with incense and candles. Death is alive, they whispered. Death lives inside life, as bones dance within the body. Yesterday is within today. Yesterday never dies.

Mexico. Mexico (9-10)

This lyrical passage constructs Mexican identity around an image of the invaded and conquered Indian, and celebrates its absorption into the mestizo. Additionally, Urrea romanticizes a very specific Indigenous past and summons several images of mestizaje: the mixture of milk and coffee, the smell of ceremonial copal with candles. The quote's images, moreover, disclose a significant point about the ways in which Urrea imagines Mexico, Mexicans, and native people living in Mexico. Urrea proclaims that the un-diluted and the un-invaded Mexico is still alive – “Yesterday is within today” (10). He blames indigenous people for assimilating rather than focusing on why they would act with such fear and self-loathing ways. The language use here is troubling because even though Urrea uses most of the indigenous characters in the novel as props and literary devices to construct his two major characters, they are present everywhere in the novel. Nonetheless Tomas makes the decision to connect the Indian to “[y]esterday” and thus imply that the Indian is a relic of the past. Furthermore, he speaks to the enormity and diversity of Mexico – “Mexico was too big. It has too many colors. It was noisier than anyone could have imagined” (9). Yet his decision to allude to “the great and fallen Tenochtitlán” as the model for Mexico's indigenous past undermines the heterogeneity of Mexico's indigenous identities, and speaks to the influence Mexican nationalism's

narratives have had on the Chicana/o indigenous imaginary. Geographically, Tenochtitlán is nowhere near Cabora and the Rio Yaqui. Moreover, the various indigenous nations and communities in southern Sonora and northern Sinaloa each have distinct histories of their own. Thus, Luis Urrea's decision to mobilize Aztec imagery when referring to the Native people of Sonora and Sinaloa is puzzling and disrespectful.

Chicana/o literary *indigenismo* appropriates Mexican nationalist discourse to “assert a pre-Conquest origin in the Americas” and “create a narrative of belonging” (Contreras 6). In a reading of the passage above, Dr. Martinez-Cruz argues that “[h]ere we find that the notions of Cayetana's cup and the national womb are co-identified. La Semalú is the hummingbird, the Mesoamerican Holy Spirit whose pregnant body houses the past centuries and the present hour” (152). In other words, Cayetana brings two worlds together. Her body has a past, and it is vital to the present, but only as a mother to the future. Martinez-Cruz's interpretation stresses that Cayetana's body births the future of Mexico – the Mestiza, Teresa. Thus, she ignores the sexual violence that created Teresa, and flattens native diversity in order to tell a story Chicanas/os would like to hear about their indigenous past – a history of undisturbed descent and dissent.

Martinez-Cruz reads *Hummingbird's Daughter* as a resistance narrative without problematizing its conception of indigeneity. In the quote above, mestizaje represents a construction of Mexican and Chicana/o identity that involves the violent erasure of Cayetana. While the passage sounds appealing and uplifting, it does little to acknowledge indigenous peoples continual struggle for autonomy. Furthermore, Martinez-Cruz's reading homogenizes indigenous peoples. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla contends that

“[b]efore the European invasion, each one of the people who occupied the territory that today is Mexico had a particular, clearly identified social and ethnic identity” (76). However, many indigenous people maintained clear tribal affiliations long after the “invasion.” Cayetana and Teresa, for example, are Tehueco. Teresa’s grandmother “was Mayo,” and her great-grandmother “was Yaqui” (70). The Tehueco, Mayo, and Yaqui are individually distinct Cahita speaking peoples that share many cultural customs and histories. Each has resisted genocide and fought vehemently – the Yaqui are still fighting – for their autonomy. To simply lump Cayetana, and thus Teresa, as part of the “Mesoamerican Holy Spirit” does little to honor their distinct cultural identity for which many struggle for its survival. The appropriation of Cayetana as nothing more than “the national womb,” and Teresa as an iconic Chicana/o figure may serve Chicanas/os looking to reconstruct mythic origins, but it does little for a reading of Teresa that takes into account how as an indigenous person she is deeply invested in improving the daily lives of The People. Furthermore, even if Cayetana is romantically named the “Mesoamerican holy spirit,” the metaphor does little to problematize the ways in which nationalist discourses have often resulted in the physical erasure of indigenous peoples,

Luis Urrea’s desire to have Teresa function as a hybrid shapes the narrative in a multiple of ways, and reflects a broader paradigm of an imagined Chicana/o indigeneity that addresses the “dual displacement [of Chicana/os] and the need to create a narrative of belonging” (Contreras 6). The question of Teresa’s identity dominates the first section and remains prevalent throughout the whole novel. Early in the novel Teresa becomes curious about her Indian identity after Huila, addressing her in the mother tongue, notes

that Teresa does not “look like an Indian” (53). Teresa makes the switch from Spanish to Cahita easily, and seems to add some complexity to a racialized indigeneity coded in phenotype by asking, “[w]hat do Indians look like?” (53). In response to Teresa, Huila chuckles and says “Us” (53). In the same way, Teresa’s aunt also relieves some of the tension surrounding Teresa’s identity. When Teresa asks her aunt, “Am I an Indian?” her aunt responds, “We are the people” (53). Yet, Urrea’s preoccupation with Teresa’s indigenous identity has more to do validating hybridity and objectifying Teresa’s indigeneity than offering a serious critique of *mestizaje*.

Teresa challenges the power structures, and becomes dangerous to the Díaz regime. Because the Díaz regime feared an indigenous uprising if they were to kill Teresa, Díaz sentences Teresa to deportation to the United States. Díaz orders Mexican soldiers to board Tomás and Teresa onto a train full of citizens hoping that the Yaqui will attack the train in order to free Teresa and kill some of the innocent people. In Díaz’s view, the attack would garner public support for his “war” against the Yaqui. On the train Teresa tries to convince Enríquez to let her stop the attack. However, Enríquez maintains that his experience fighting Indians has convinced him that, “[t]hey will not hold their fire. They will not show mercy. They will spare no one” (490). Teresa responds, “And I...have been an Indian all my life. I tell you they will not fire” (490). In the interaction between the two, Teresa continually repeats, “I know who I am...I know what I am.” (491). The novel ends after Teresa uses her influence over the Yaqui to stop them from attacking the train and attempting to free her. Hence, Teresa leaves Mexico after resolving any question about her indigenous identity and bringing a moment of

peace between the Yaqui and the Mexican military by placing her body between the two. In this instance, Teresa acts as a mediator between the Yaqui and the *Yoris*, and becomes a bridge to create harmony. Teresa's hybridity, hence, becomes the mechanism for fabricating peace before the train leaves the Yaqui behind and carries Teresa forward.

Moreover, Teresa becomes essential to the redemption of Tomás. Paloma Martinez-Cruz argues that the curative aspect of Teresa's persona "belongs to a unique moment in the Mesoamerican struggle for self-representation and self-determination, but all seek to restore devalued knowledge transmitted by women who propose a cure for the fever of the Western mind" (Martinez-Cruz 157). Tomás often ridicules and mocks Teresa's saint like role and shows repulsion and alarm towards the indigenous masses that surround the house at Cabora. However, as they board the train to leave Mexico Tomás is "suddenly surprised by [his] pride in Teresita's miracles" (489). Martinez-Cruz attributes the "subversion of Tomás's Yori identity, and his gradual identification with his daughter and the downtrodden people who receive her ministrations" to Teresa's ability and willingness to heal and become a mediator (Martinez-Cruz 154). One night while Teresa and Tomás discuss their lives, they hear knocking at the door. A little Indian boy stood there. He had blackened bare feet, "toenails split and bloody. His eyes were runny, and his upper lip was caked in crystallized snot. His hair was hard and vertical, coming off his scalp in spikes" (399). His stink overwhelmed the kitchen, and "his head – it was full of infected sores. Pus formed peso-sized pools on his scalp" (400). In this scene Luis Urrea uses the suffering of a child and indulges in the inhumane condition of the young boy to create a sharp contrast between the reaction of Tomás who

is disgusted by him (a sharp contrast to his infatuation with the exotic Huila), and Teresa who expresses concern and embraces him. Teresa entices Tomás into helping restore the child to dignity,

“Pluck,” she told her father.

“Pluck what?”

“Lice.”

“You’re kidding.”

“No, I’m not kidding. Pluck them and pop them”

“But I’ll get pus on my fingers!”

“You can wash your hands.”

“But it’s disgusting!”

“No, Father. Letting an orphan suffer is disgusting.” (402)

Tomás ends up assisting Teresa, and the fourth section of the book ends with the three characters falling asleep on the couch. In response to this scene Martinez-Cruz draws the following conclusion about this scene,

Prior to this experience, Teresa’s father had never seen lice, although this experience helped him discover that everyone outside of the big house suffered from them. Teresa is surprised to discover that he has such little knowledge of the lives of the People right outside his door...The next day, Gabrisela [*sic*] finds the three of them asleep together on the couch, an image that shows he has dispelled Yori ignorance and turned towards

Mesoamerican truth. This was achieved by means of his daughter's centrifugal transmission of healing. (156)

The scene with the young boy alludes to the oppressive reality faced by native people. Furthermore, it shows the sharp class and racial distinctions that differentiate Tomás from the indigenous peoples. The racist and sexist colonial structures violently create and manufacture a social reality where indigenous brown bodies are dispensable labor; the dehumanization of children is just one product of that system.

Tomás's encounter with the young boy speaks to the ways in which the innocence and protection of children does not carry across race and class. Tomás's shock at finding out that most of the people outside of the big house have lice reveals the absurdity of colonialism and its discourses as the exposure shatters Tomás's "innocence" and worldview. Yet, Martínez-Cruz's reading of this scene appropriates it for a Chicana/o discourse that seems to imply that "the only good Indian is the mythic Indian," and has no mention of the suffering child (Contreras 25). She longs to construct the fabled "Mesoamerican" healer, and preserve the story Chicana/o *indigenismo* wishes to tell. In doing so, she (re)enacts a sort of violence in the erasure of the nameless boy. His suffering becomes necessary for that story and Tomás's redemption.

TOMÁS, THE HUMMINGBIRD'S RAPIST

Luis Urrea's effort to centralize Tomás and make him a sympathetic character accentuates the fact that *Hummingbird's Daughter* tells a story more about Tomás than it does Teresa. Furthermore, this emphasis on Tomás relates to Luis Urrea's desire to

possess Teresa and consume her exoticized indigeneity. In *Borderland Saints*, Desirée Martín asserts that Luis Urrea's "possessive claim on Teresa Urrea, whether literal or figurative, serves as a way to associate his family history to Chicano and borderlands history in general" (Martín 55). Furthermore, "this personal and collective social history is reinforced by Luis Urrea's focus on La Santa de Cabora's mystical, indigenous heritage, folkways, and teachings" (55). Martín's claims connect to conclusions Sheila Marie Contreras draws in her historical delineation of Chicana/o and Mexican *indigenismo* in *Blood Lines*. Contreras argues that "Chicana/o indigenist attempts to assert a pre-Conquest origin in the Americas should be understood in relation to [the] dual displacement and the need to create a narrative of belonging" (6). However, "even as Chicana/o indigenist discourse puts forth its critiques of racial domination, colonial violence, and land removal, it remains embedded within the very 'circuits' of knowledge and power that have advanced imperialist agendas" (10). Thus, Tomás's character demands examination in order to demonstrate the ways in which these circuits of mythmaking re-inscribe indigenous people as Other in the process of Mexican identity formation.

Urrea establishes Tomás's compassion early in the novel. Frankly, Tomás's appearance as a benign and generous patriarch preserves the story of "Mexican male industrial capitalist saviors" (Guidotti-Hernández 208). The economy of Mexican identity production necessitates that Tomás appear redeemable in the (mis)representation of The People. Tomás's characterization in the novel shows western compassion and superiority, and lends to the justification of European patronage (read: rule and conquest)

over the numerous and diverse indigenous nations of Mexico. Throughout the narrative, Tomás fills the role of the colonial “white savior.” In the scene preceding the narration of Don Refugio’s self-immolation, Tomás shows concern for a Yaqui man who had just lost his wife and his home:

Military men appeared one day with a deed from the government that his land had been sold to a gringo investor who intended to run sheep on the land and harvest peaches irrigated with Yaqui River water. When the old man had resisted, he had been tied to a fence and horsewhipped. He and his wife had been sent forth on foot, and their ranchería was now the home of an Irishman from Chicago. (32)

The man’s wife dies on their walk from The Rio Yaqui, Sonora to Ocoroni, Sinaloa after western capitalists viciously threw them off their land. The passage reflects the novel’s historicity yet indigenous struggles do not take a center role in the narrative. Instead, Urrea uses indigenous oppression to complement Tomás’s character. After hearing the old man’s story, Tomás takes “off his hat and put[s] it on the old man’s head,” and per Tomás order the ranch hands take the man to Huila (32). Thus, Luis Urrea instantly mends the atrocities the man suffers with Tomás’s kindness. Similarly, when Tomás stumbles upon men burying two indigenous peasants alive, the text again quickly shifts the focus to Tomás’s morality by having him offer to purchase the couple. Moreover, on the way to Cabora he feeds hungry travelers. And when the uprooted hacienda arrives at Cabora to find the ranch ransacked by Yaquis, instead of seeking revenge Tomás offers the Yaqui ten percent of the ranch’s annual yields. In all these instances the *The*

Hummingbird's Daughter keeps the reader from dwelling on the act of violence taking place by offering an image of a colonial savior.

Tomás's benevolence pushes the violence against native peoples to the periphery and neutralizes the novel's political significance for indigenous people. The historical and geographical context of the novel is that of violence. The Díaz regime, in the name of a unified Mexican nation-state and its advancement into modernity, conducted a genocidal war against the Yaqui. Under new liberalization policies the Mexican government seized Tribal lands, and disenfranchised people to create labor for *haciendas* like Tomás's. According to Guidotti-Hernández in *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries*, "narratives of imperial benevolence like this one create a story about great Mexican male industrial capitalist saviors" while saying "nothing of the economic causes behind the wars that displaced them in the first place" (Guidotti-Hernández 208). In this respect, Tomás's story helps create a blurred view of colonial violence that works to justify imperialism and actively erase indigenous peoples. Problematically, *The Hummingbird's Daughter* places the reader in contact with this violence but in such a way that it is always already offset by either Tomás's charity or Teresa's mysticism. In other words, dismembered brown bodies become just plot points for developing Tomás and Teresa's characters.

For instance, in the retelling of Don Refugio's story Tomás displaces the significance of Don Refugio's self-immolation and uses the story to vindicate his own paternalism. In a conversation one night during dinner Tomás asks Huila if the peasants respect him. Huila takes her time answering, as if Tomás is an infant that must be taught

patience, before asking Tomás if he has done anything worthy of respect. Even though Huila saved the old man, Tomás tries to take credit. This prompts Huila to inquire about Tomás's adoration of The People:

“what do you care if an old rancho lives or dies? Why do you like the People so much? Aside from the girls. Everybody knows why you like the girls.”

He cleared his throat. This girl business was best left unanswered. But the rest of it. At last! Something to talk about!

“The People!” he said.

“That's what I said. Are you deaf?”

“Don Refugio,” he finally replied. (42)

This exchange between Tomás and Huila highlights the reoccurring effort to position Tomás as a benevolent and compassionate hacienda owner and serves a significant function in the novel. Tomás's refusal to acknowledge Huila's question regarding the girls reflects the ways in which silences and narratives work to conceal power relations. The “girl business was best left unanswered,” because addressing the question posited by Huila undermines Luis Urrea's narrative of Tomás as the white capitalist savior. Tomás's longings for intimate connections with the erotic and sexualized Other relates to the racial, gender, class, and sexual hierarchies of Mexico in the late Nineteenth Century. However, Tomás's “enjoyment” of racialized and fetishized indigenous women and his reluctance to address Huila's questions are not only products of those social conditions. His continuous consumption of exotic Others “reinscribes and maintains the *status quo*”

and alludes to a significant point regarding white subjectivity (Hooks 22). The statement expressed by Huila is one of the few instances where the novel challenges Tomás's exploitation of Native women, and it is significant that it comes from a woman. However, Luis Urrea uses the passage not to get at gender, racial, and power issues, but to transition the novel into a story of white subject making.

The discussion presents Tomás's rationalization for his own positionality and leads to the story of Don Refugio. Bandits orphan Tomás when they kill his dad, leaving him alone to live with his uncle, the family patriarch. Don Refugio, an old Yaqui man, raises Tomás and teaches him compassion for the People. Don Refugio was a *survivor* of the massacre at BÁCUM, one of the eight Yaqui villages, where the Mexican Government rounded up the village into the church and burnt them alive. While whether or not Don Refugio is a citizen of the town or with the Mexican army remains ambiguous, he does rescue a young boy and slip away through a thicket of *nopales*:

There he held the boy and watched as the soldiers slammed the doors and nailed them shut and the people within began crying out as they realized their fate and buckets of burning pitch were flung into the shattered windows and the cries rose to insane shrieks and frantic pounding as the 450 bodies within ignited. He often told Tomás that BÁCUM had taught him one lesson: sinners were not the only ones fated to burn. (44)

Don Refugio's actions in this event functions as a basis to evaluate his other actions in the novel, and consider how the text is embedded in an imperial literary tradition that is part of "an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject"

(Spivak 271). Tomás's relationship to Don Refugio, and the fact that he needs to tell this story to Huila, relates "to the problem of the European Subject, which seeks to produce an Other that would consolidate an inside, its own subject status" (Spivak 293). Tomás imagines that he is central to Don Refugio's suicide. However Tomás's reading of the situation reflects his own desire and positionality within a worldview actively involved in the construction of the Other.

Tomás goes on to tell Huila the rest of the story and projects his own subjectivity and desire onto Don Refugio's burning body. One morning a wagon caravan is parked outside the house with women prisoners chained "neck to neck" – "Tomás didn't know yet to feel bad for them" (43). Part of each woman's left arm was hacked off. The statement, "Tomás didn't know yet to feel bad for them," sets up Tomás's life changing moment that brings him closer to The Paper. Thus the thick display of violence functions not so much as a critique of the Díaz regime's desire to discipline Yaqui and Mayo subjects, but more as a ceremonial coming of age for Tomás. The disregard for indigenous humanity on the part of the Díaz regime serves as evidence that economic progress and modernity were more valuable than human lives. The fact that Tomás needs to learn or be taught "to feel bad for them" is deeply disturbing, as if the merciless sight of disfigured human bodies is not enough in itself to warrant a human response from him. Seeing the wreckage of imperialism and the gross display of racialized violence, Don Refugio goes into his home and retrieves an old wooden chair and a "small red can" of kerosene, repeatedly telling Tomás to leave him (46). Don Refugio proceeds to place the

chair under an “old cottonwood,” sits down, and ask Tomás for a cigarette. He then pries “the cap off the red can and pour[s] the kerosene over his head” (46):

He stared at Tomás, who was already starting to shout. “You, boy,” he said. “Don’t be like your fathers.” He struck the match and exploded in flame.

The Heat knocked Tomás down. He sat up and stared as Don Refugio burned without moving, his hand held up and holding the burned match as it charred. The cottonwood caught on fire, its trunk blackening, the branches over Refugio’s head snapping and sparking. (46)

Tomás finishes the story and turns back to a speechless Huila. Wiping tears from his eyes, Tomás tells Huila that he has never told anyone else the story, and immediately asks Huila for a response. Tomás appears to crave validation from Huila, as if the story establishes a clear reason for why Tomás believes he has a responsibility to help the People. Huila gives him a pat on the arm and questions the servants about dessert. The moment mirrors the trauma and agony of the Bacum massacre. In order to make the Yaqui docile Mexican subjects, the Mexican government used fire to instill fear and obedience to the state. Consequently, Don Refugio’s appropriation of that terroristic act as a form of self-immolation dislocates and negates Mexico’s attempt to strip Yaqui agency and subjectivity and is a tremendously emblematic act of subversion. Perhaps Don Refugio lights himself on fire as a form of resistance, a symbolic message to communicate his anger, sorrow, or hatred. As the Mexican government infamously used cottonwoods to hang Yaqui, Don Refugio could be making a huge political

statement by lighting himself on fire and taking the tree with him. Or possibly the action conveys guilt, because either Don Refugio felt he should have died that day in the barn, or he feels partially responsible for the massacre at Báscum. The latter makes even more sense if Don Refugio was a Yaqui fighting for the Mexican Army, a common occurrence. Conceivably the action communicates a refusal to fear death – a comment on the impossibility of Yaqui subjugation as Don Refugio would rather die than experience the imposition of Mexican rule.

Yet, Tomás renders himself vulnerable to Huila because he wants to have an *intimate* connection with her and prove to himself the encounter with Don Refugio changed him and that he understands the pair of Indians. Bell Hooks argues that imperialist nostalgia “often obscures contemporary cultural strategies deployed not to mourn but to celebrate the sense of a continuum of “primitivism.” In mass culture, imperialist nostalgia takes the form of reenacting and re-ritualizing in different ways the imperialist, colonizing journey as narrative fantasy of power and desire, of seduction by the Other” (Hooks 25). Tomás appropriates the action to make it about himself and his redemption. However, Huila refuses to contribute to Tomás’s inability to grasp anything outside of his western subjectivity. She pities Tomás and recognizes that nothing she can say could pull Tomás out of the fact that he has taken a highly symbolic Yaqui death and made it about him. The mock paternalistic pat on the arm is reminiscent of a touch a parent offers when there are no words to be said. Tomás uses Don Refugio’s death to create an origin narrative for his own colonial subjectivity where Tomás learns “to feel bad for” for the indigenous people (43). Don Refugio’s role in the novel, and the

function of his burning body, is to appear as “the acknowledged Other must” in order to preserve “white western conceptions of the dark Other” (Hooks 26). Don Refugio’s motivations escape re-inscription into Tomás’s harmonized imaginary of indigenous peoples.

The “preceding traditions of Mexican indigenism and European primitivism” deeply influence Chicana/o *indigenismo* (Contreras 10). Therefore, scholars must understand that native peoples have been strategically mis-represented within myths such as that of the “Vanishing America” and the “noble savage” in order to conquer and colonize (Contreras 10). In many ways, Chicana/o literary indigenism re-fashions and continues these narratives. These myths are grounded in imperialist discourses employed by Europeans to drive and justify the invasion of the Americas. These colonial tropes, which are still continuously (re)coded to maintain colonial social hierarchies, assisted in the subjugation and genocide of native people and their cultures. Thus, the unexamined production and reproduction of these narratives, and their celebration, duplicates that violence and ignores contemporary struggles of indigenous people within both Mexican and the U.S. nation states. Specifically, *mestizaje* erases the continuous struggle to recuperate indigenous lands which is often ignored by Chicana/o indigenism just as Native people, and the “mainstream” populace, in the U.S. choose not to recognize the indigeneity of Chicana/o’s.

The Hummingbird’s Daughter is a story of origins. The mestizo (Teresa) and the benevolent white man (Tomás) are born and the *indio* disappears; its about constructing

beginnings for the Mexico that some writers would like to imagine. A Mexico in which the mestizo and the *yoris* have a future, but the Yaqui, Tehueco, and Mayo do not.

Chapter Two: Decolonial Aesthetics and a Critique of Mestizaje in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*

“the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny.”

- Alberto Alurista

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of The Dead* offers a clear critique of mestizaje and situates the border within a larger system of human exploitation. Along with her critique of the objectification of indigenous identities and bodies, Silko suggests that survival for indigenous people must be created through a trans-indigenous consciousness and inter-tribal solidarity. Yet, if the novel is to be a mobilization of “tribal affiliations and knowledge’s in an effort to define a transnational strategy of resistance to both the old and the new colonialisms,” it remains paramount to investigate the ways in which indigeneity is imagined within *Almanac*, and specifically how it contests notions of hybridity and mestizaje (Cherniavsky 1). *Almanac*'s indigenous characters embody indigeneity, not on racialized biological terms, but in tribal relations, land, and a politicized conscious. The text employs a decolonial aesthetics to bring attention to the ways in which indigenous bodies are often reduced in biological terms through a process of racialization. Decolonial aesthetics entail an awareness of imperialism's dehumanizing discourses. Thus Silko's decolonial project mobilizes narratives that work to subvert the social hierarchies embedded within, and reproduced by, imperial representations of exoticized and devalued human beings. In this respect, *Almanac* engages in discussions of *mestizaje* and how discourses of racial purity are part of an ongoing process of colonization and global capital which relies on the commodification

and exploitation of brown bodies. This is why *Almanac* remains a much more powerful and useful text. Where Silko's *Ceremony* and Urrea's *The Hummingbird's Daughter* are caught up in the redemption of mestizo and white characters through Tribal Peoples – thus giving them a place in an romanticized Tribal world – *Almanac* remains less concerned with the reconciliation and recuperation of a postmodern subject and more invested with improving the economic and social conditions of indigenous people. Consequently, the decolonial aesthetics in *Almanac* means retrieving native lands and bringing down a larger economic regime that sustains indigenous subjugation. With this in mind, *Almanac's* characters appropriate and reproduce cultural apparatuses that are “tainted,” “corrupted,” and “unauthentic,” as the novel does not push a pure pre-modern or romantic image of indigenous peoples. However, Silko's trans-tribal approach, in many ways, minimizes tribal differences, and reestablishes homophobic discourses. Using homosexuality as a metaphor for a violent patriarchal society, obsessed with unmitigated desire, is not and never will be an appropriate or unproblematic literary trope, and should never be used as such. Still, *Almanac* remains a much more useful text for imagining indigeneity within the current global economy than Chicana/o *indeginismo*. Rejecting hybridity and Indigeneity as an Aztec relic from the past, Silko locates racialized discourses, such as *mestizaje*, in the world of the destroyers and their destructive capitalist system.

Published in 1991, and in many ways a response to the quincentenary of the “discovery,” *Almanac* spans 500 years and international borders as it recounts the stories of numerous people from Alaska, to the borderlands of the southwest, to Argentina. The

novel jumps back and forth in time and in between several European, indigenous, African, and mestizo protagonists. Zeta, a Yaqui woman, engages in drug and arms smuggling across the US-Mexico border, while her sister, Lecha, travels extensively, and spends some time using her ability to find murder victims before settling back at the ranch in Arizona given to the twins by their white father, a professional geographer. Both sisters are invested in preserving and contributing to the ancient, and yet simultaneously modern, *Almanac* given to them by their Yaqui grandmother, Yoeme – a significant name considering the Yaqui refer to themselves as *yo'eme*, which translates to “The People.” Mayans El Feo and Angelita, in collaboration with transnational networks, gather an indigenous army together in the mountains of southern Mexico as El Feo’s twin brother, Tacho, works undercover as the driver for the mestizo capitalist Menardo. All the while, Anglo-American Seese comes into contact with the exiled Laguna man, Sterling, whilst working for Lecha in an attempt to recover the whereabouts of her lost child from the misogynistic Beaufrey. This is just to name a few of the characters. There is also Clinton, a black Indian; Max Blue, a bloodthirsty serial killer; Calabazas, a drug running Yaqui, and the basset hound fucking Judge. With an apparent obsession with blood, bestiality, and cross-racial contact, the novel launches a relentless critique at the destroyers and the destructive forces of colonialism and hyper-commodification they represent. Contesting notions of the pure and stoic Indian, Tribal characters in *Almanac* appropriate whatever they need to survive. Silko’s text is at once homophobic, angry, and violent but with a clear message intact: “The Indian Wars have never ended in the Americas. Native Americans acknowledge no borders; they seek

nothing less than the return of all tribal lands” (Preface). Yet *Almanac* does not construct the “The Indian Wars” into a European vs. Native dichotomy and a U.S. centric discussion of indigeneity. The novel explores the ways in which indigeneity has been figured, constructed, and exploited, throughout the Americas.

Historically, Mexico’s colonial government employed *mestizaje* as a nation making discourse involving indigenous erasure. Kathleen Alcalá writes that:

The Mexican government had a specific policy, beginning with its independence from Spain in 1840, of not recognizing Indian tribes. The official line was that “we are all Mexican, and so will be treated equally.” This was, in part, to erase class distinctions and property rights that favored those born in Spain. The reality was that Indian rights were systematically violated, with deeds to land inevitably ending up in the hands of non-indians. Strong local governments, especially Indian, were viewed with paranoia by the fledgling national government, and tribes that persisted in showing local strength and organization were attacked by federal troops. The Yaquis, for example, were killed, driven north, or sold into slavery to work on the henequen plantations in the Yucatán. (39).

The Mexican government again shifted their policy towards Indians in the post-revolutionary 1930’s when they adopted Vasconcelos’s *raza cosmica* and institutionalized a European imagined Aztec past; much to the same result for indigenous nations. Chicana/o *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* serve nationalist projects that include an economic endeavor to produce both consumable bodies and consumable identities. For

instance, Chicana/o *indigenismo* struggles to dictate the point at which Chicana/o identity develops by appropriating a metaphor of biological mixing that “incorporate[s] the figure of Indian in the consolidation of a nationalist identity in order to effectively exclude contemporary Indians” (Saldaña-Portillo 413). Consequently, as (detrribalized) Chicana/os inhabit the southwest alongside indigenous nations, it is important to discuss texts from the literary traditions of the two ethnic groups against each other. By “two ethnic groups,” I do not mean to homogenize distinct indigenous nations and heterogeneous Mexican-American, Chicana/o, and Latina/o communities, but to draw attention to the fact that the “border space” should not just be figured as a place of dichotomies and nuanced hybridization. As Chicana/o literary *indigenismo* appropriates and redefines a metaphor of violent racial blending to deal with issues of social and economic oppression as well as cultural and linguistic survival in the United States, it ignores (and thus interpolates) a Native American literary tradition that problematizes, re-figures, and re-imagines the “border” narrative conceptualized in a Mexican/Anglo American dichotomy.

Interpolating mestizo characters alongside U.S. and Mexican American Indian characters, *Almanac*'s critique of capitalism's dependency on violence and the dehumanization of its subjects, speaks directly to issues of mestizaje and its parallels – Mexican and Chicana/o *indigenismo*. Through the reoccurring narratives of objectified bodies, furthermore, Silko draws attention to the fact that the fixation of blood in tribal blood quantum enrollment policies resides in a larger imaginary of racial purity and white supremacy. *Almanac*'s multi-vocal approach that regularly features indigenous

protagonists resists discourses of the “vanishing American” and the appropriation of native identity for white subject making. Though it has attracted numerous scholarly attention – notably that of Louis Owens, Sean Teuton, John Muthyala, Eva Cherniavsky, Channette Romero, and James Cox – its lack of “mainstream” attention in contrast to the widely read *Ceremony* alludes to the fact that “America loves Indian culture; America is much less enthusiastic about Indian land title” (Womack 11). Though *Almanac*’s lack of mainstream attention also relates the novels size and scope, Creek writer Craig Womack suggests, *In Red on Red*, that, “Native written fictional stories about reconnection to Native culture enjoy a much wider popular appeal than nonfiction written by Indians concerning their tribe’s land claims or politics” (Womack 11). The indifference to live human beings, as opposed to the Indian of fictional imaginations speaks to the commodification of a very specific kind of indigenous identity, and implies a narrative of cultural and racial authenticity. Silko centers tribal subjectivities to critique the destructive qualities of colonialism and late capitalism. She refuses to reproduce narratives that depoliticize Native issues and reinscribe Indians into noble and stoic savages. Furthermore, *Almanac* addresses issues that extend beyond what are usually imagined as indigenous concerns, and provides meaningful commentary on a broader capitalist endeavor of ethnic identity production.

A discussion of mestizaje become appropriate not just in Chicana/o, Mexican-American, and Mexican studies, but also in the broader discussions of identity making as it relates to the construction of the nation state and its subject. In “Who’s the Indian in Aztlán? Re-writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandon,” Josefina

Saldaña-Portillo suggests that, “when we appropriate the tropes of mestizaje and indigenismo, we are necessarily operating within the logic of representation to which these tropes belong” (Saldaña-Portillo 413). Hence, various colonial representations of the Indian and Indio, mestizaje being just one, belong to a history of heteronormative, patriarchal, and racist discourses. Saldaña-Portillo reads the Zapatista movement as a critique of,

mestizaje and indigenismo as parallel ideologies that incorporate the figure of Indian in the consolidation of a nationalist identity in order to effectively exclude contemporary Indians. Thus, in our Chicano reappropriation of the biologized terms of mestizaje and indigenismo, we are also always recuperating the Indian as an ancestral past rather than recognizing contemporary Indians as co-inhabitants not only of this continent abstractly conceived, but of the neighborhoods and streets of hundreds of U.S. cities and towns. (Saldaña-Portillo 413)

Significantly, Saldaña-Portillo contends that a negation of *mestizaje* is not to deny Chicana/Mexican-American indigeneity, as “official” tribal people often do, but a refusal “to reduce indigenous subjectivity, and indeed Mexican mestizo identity, to biologicistic representations that, in discursive and political terms, always already places the Indian under erasure” (Saldaña-Portillo).

In connection to the Saldaña-Portillo article, Silko's *Almanac* tells the story of an indigenous army in the mountains of Chiapas several years before the Zapatistas gained international attention. Additionally, Saldaña-Portillo grounds her critique of *mestizaje* in

an analysis of Chicana/o *indigenismo* within the texts of Gloria Anzaldúa and Richard Rodriguez. Furthermore, Saldaña-Portillo's article relates to Silko's novel in the sense that they both engage with tribal revolutionary groups and an extended critique of the continuous colonization of the Americas "already soaked with Native American and African blood" (Silko 739). However, Silko parallels the ecological and humanistic destruction of contemporary globalized capital to the reduction of human beings to commodifiable categories. This reduction is perhaps most transparent in the case of indigenous peoples where capitalism reduces indigenous identities to blood, and minimizes indigenous people into relics of U.S. and Mexican history.

MENARDO, THE MESTIZO

Almanac engages with the ongoing project of colonial discourses and their (mis)representations of Indians in the U.S. and *Indios* in Mexico. Rampant narratives of authenticity and blood are central to this issue. These narratives are dangerous because they reduce human lives to categorical and racialized identities "that at once obliterates and reconstitutes in another register the thing or person named" (Cherniavsky 3). As seen in *Almanac*, the economy of ethnic identity production leads to the subjugation and exploitation of brown bodies. Mestizaje, and other biologically based narratives, are not celebrated but put under the microscope and dissected as discourse that aims not to liberate, but categorize, objectify, and dominate indigenous people as part of the ongoing process of colonization. By controlling the very method in which identities get produced and reproduced in a capitalist imaginary, hyper commodification and the racial nationalist

project dictates the means in which colonized brown people perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. Moreover, white subjectivity “claim[s] the body of the colored Other instrumentally, as an explored terrain, a symbolic frontier that will be fertile ground for their reconstruction of the masculine norm, for asserting themselves as transgressive desiring subjects” (Hooks 24). I would also argue that the consumption of indigenous bodies does not just occur in symbolic sexual objectification of “colored Other[s],” but that indigenous bodies are constantly consumed (in the destructive sense) through the production of a racialized labor force. In this respect, the struggle for tribal autonomy takes place in the flesh. This is not unlike the ways in which people are interpolated into *mestizaje*. *Mestizaje* solidifies and normalizes white supremacy within an imagined mestizo nation. Much like in the United States, where racial purity assures, reproduces, and justifies hierarchies and continues the dehumanizing project of colonialism within a system of hyper-objectification. As a result, *Almanac* locates racism in a capitalist ideology that views bodies as objects.

In *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*, Eva Marie Garrouette deconstructs notions of “racial purity.” She explores the implications of legally, politically, and biologically conceptualizing indigenous identity as “[t]oday, as in the past, different definitions of identity are applied to this group in different contexts and with different profound consequences” (Garrouette 9). Garrouette traces contemporary “biological definitions of identity” in the U.S. to “nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century theories of race introduced by Euro-Americans” (42). These theories naturalized race and

postulated that behavior was inherent in biological makeup. As part of her historical delineation of blood, Garoutte posits that;

These turn-of-the-century theories of race found a very precise way to talk about *amount* of ancestry in the idea of blood quantum, or degree of blood. The notion of blood quantum as a standard of Indianness emerged with force in the nineteenth century. Its most significant early usage as a standard of identification was in the General Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887, which led to the creation of the Dawes Rolls...It has been part of the popular – and legal and academic – lore about Indians ever since.

Given this standard of identification, full bloods tend to be seen as the “really real,” the quintessential Indians, while others are viewed as Indians in diminishing degrees...The ultimate and explicit federal intention was to use the blood quantum standard as a means to liquidate tribal lands and to eliminate government trust responsibility to tribes, along with entitlement programs, treaty rights, and reservations. Through intermarriage and application of a biological definition of identity Indians would eventually become citizens indistinguishable from all other citizens.

(42)

This excerpt speaks to an attempted legislative and conceptual genocide. The obsession with blood became an effective political tool for the U.S. as it found its way into many cultural texts often coded in language of cultural authenticity. Cultural purity gives rise to notions of biculturalism and hybridity, issues prominent in cultural studies

discourses. Yet, biculturalism and hybridity reproduce the same tropes of biological and cultural purity. Mestizaje relies on the logic of hybridity, and as we saw in *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, appropriated and employed as a meditative tool can be utilized to justify European domination. Hybridity objectifies the human body as biological parts that can be pulled apart and categorized. Furthermore, as Craig Womack asks, “does the idea of hybridization (which I suppose is useful to those searching for new varieties of seed corn) necessarily say much about the historical and contemporary challenges of Native authors?” (Womack 142). While Chicana/o nationalist discourse idealizes *mestizaje* and hybridity, it does little to create a productive conversation regarding issues of gender, sexual, and racial inequalities. Likewise, many novels from the so-called Native American Renaissance period, such as Silko’s *Ceremony* and James Welch’s *Winter in the Blood*, were primarily concerned with issues of hybridity and mixed-blood identity. However, hybridity implies notions of racial purity and white supremacist notions of authenticity. Accordingly, *Almanac* not only critiques *mestizaje*, but effectively engages with the ways in which notions of hybridity often function to maintain the status quo and affirm whiteness.

Menardo, the mestizo, pursues and consumes images of whiteness and European superiority throughout the novel. His interests eventually kills him when he confidently puts on a bulletproof vest and then makes the mistake of demanding that Tacho shoot him. Menardo is “self-conscious about his flat, thick nose and the darkening of his skin under the Tucson sun” (264). While in Tucson looking to secure an arms contract for his burgeoning “insurance and security” business, Menardo is particularly sensitive to the

effect his appearance has on the white shop owners who “unconsciously touch their holsters when Menardo walks in their doors” (264). Within the U.S. Menardo’s “flat, thick nose” and “darkening” skin code him as alien, a foreigner, a Mexican, but definitely not an indigenous person. Yet those same features in Mexico are related with *los Indios*, an association Menardo fervently wants to disconnect from:

Pansón was the name they called him, and he did not mind it because one of the older boys had found a far worse name. For the rest of his life Menardo could hardly think of it, let alone whisper it. When he looked in the mirror to shave, it always came back to him. Flat Nose. A slang name the Indians were called...The boy who made up the name was dark skinned himself, but he was also tall and had legs and arms of a man (259)

This passage denotes the objectification of Menardo and the other boy’s brown bodies. Ostracized and racialized, Menardo learns to hate the image he sees in the mirror, an image that signifies “slow, sloppy, and destructive” (495). When he looks in the mirror all he becomes is a “Flat Nose,” and the other boy is simply “dark skinned,” “legs,” and “arms.” The bigger boy embodies a certain kind of masculinity and uses his much larger body to assert his dominance over Menardo. Thus he reaffirms a racialized and gendered social hierarchy by disciplining Menardo’s brown body through violence, while being able to differentiate and distance himself from his and Menardo’s dark skin through his masculinity. In this sense, the scene shows patriarchy triumphing racism. Furthermore, the fact that the boy “who made the name was dark skinned himself” speaks to the ways in which colonized subjects internalize and reproduce white supremacy.

Menardo's educational experience and the physical abuse he suffers at the hands of other little boys indicate a loss of control for Menardo and a reordering of the images given to him by his Grandfather. Moreover, the trauma he encounters conditions him to hate his own flesh. Even when Menardo does reclaim the rights to define his own body, he does so with the images given to him from a magazine. He tells everyone that his nose is flat because it was smashed in a boxing match just like the "flyweight champion of Chiapas," Mayan territory (260). The fact that Menardo's nose codes him as indigenous speaks to the ways in which colonial images become reproduced within an economy of racialized identities. Sadly, Menardo cuts off all ties to his grandfather and the tribal world, and is relieved when they put his grandfather in the ground. Menardo is horrified when he realizes "his grandfather's nose" is wider than his, and "the people the old man called 'our ancestors,' 'our family,' were in fact Indians" (259). Menardo frequently visits his grandfather, and he loves the stories the old man tells about who they are and how they got here. That was until he was taught "about pagan people and pagan stories" in school (258). Silko undermines the image of the mestizo as a mediating mythic character.

Menardo, as a Mestizo, inhabits a brown body but becomes complicit to indigenous genocide, and the suppression of indigenous resistance in Meso-America. Menardo sells insurance and security. In reality, he essentially works as mercenary for the highest bidder. His company *pacifies* "Indian and Guerrilla units" in Guatemala, San Salvador, and Honduras, and then becomes involved with the *removal* of "illegal refugees" fleeing into Mexico from the devastation caused by the violent liberalization of

their own countries (492). During a conversation between Menardo and General J., Menardo discloses his contempt for tribal people. Reminiscent of today's political environment, he believes the media's portrayal of the immigrants coming from Central America as terrorists looking to undermine national sovereignty. He considers death "the best policy" for disposing of them, "[o]therwise, you ran into all the logistical problems the Germans had encountered with disposing of the Jews" (495). According to General J, Hitler wasted a potential source of labor; "German factories might have hummed night and day powered with Jews, and the Germans might have been the first nation to enjoy complete leisure and wealth in the industrial age" (495). Here imperialism's vision of a wealthy nation is built on free dehumanized labor, which entices Menardo as he aspires to overcome his biological shortcomings and enjoy the "complete leisure and wealth" afforded to the ruling class (495).

Silko suggests that the conflict between the world of the destroyers and the Tribal world, at least partially, is waged on the level of images. Going to bed the night after the conversation with General J. Menardo,

dozed off for only an instant because when he awoke, again the bathing suit contest was still on the TV screen. But in the instant Menardo had fallen asleep, he had begun to dream. He was a tiny child in the village again, carried in the old man's arms; Indians from nearby villages had joined the others in long lines to greet Menardo in his grandpa's arms. The faces Menardo saw in the dream he recognized as all the old people who had passed on; they called him storekeeper and asked him to sell

them food on credit. Although only an infant in the dream, Menardo had been able to talk, but only Spanish, which none of the old ones seemed to understand. He felt the greatest anxiety trying to make himself understood by the Indians, who could be seen in the distance joining the line of people already waiting to speak to Menardo. *Return. We return.* He was trying to explain to them he did not have enough to feed everyone, not enough to go around, but they understood no Spanish, only Indian, which Menardo had refused to learn. (496)

Haunted by his Indian past, Menardo is unable to recognize the jumbled and collective Indian voices, because he has rejected a life based in communal and collective exchanges in order to strive for whiteness and its claim to individuality. Like Teresa in *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, Menardo is placed between two worlds, each marked by distinct images. Yet unlike Luis Urrea, Silko refuses to let Menardo become a vehicle for reconciliation. Instead, the scene becomes a critique of global capitalism's tendency to disassemble collective life in favor of individualism. Moreover, the juxtaposition of images as Menardo resides between sleep and waking implies that being Indian has to do, at least partially, with choice and communal and tribal connections. In his *awakened* reality, the TV feeds images of objectified women to Menardo; bodies are lined and judged according to their physical features. On the other hand, his dreams are full of intimate human connections that represent a collective life distinct from that of his individualistic Mestizo identity. Menardo's grandfather embraces him, and The People ask him for help, yet Menardo is unable to speak to them because he is deeply invested in

a world that privileges the overconsumption of resources and greed: “[h]e was trying to explain to them he did not have enough to feed everyone, not enough to go around” (495). He refuses to understand the world of his grandfather. He made the decision long ago that he is not an Indian.

‘BLOOD MADNESS’

“There was a strict biological order to the natural world; in this natural order, only sangre pura sufficed to command instinctive obedience from the masses.”

Almanac of the Dead

The most depraved, blood thirsty, and corrupt characters in *Almanac* are the characters most obsessed with purity – the pure bloods; the blue bloods. The blue bloods display an overwhelming amount of individualism. Originating in Spain, the notion of blue bloods relates to European aristocratic families who claimed to be pure of blood. In the context of Spain, being blue blood implied that one’s family line was not just of the oldest and wealthy bloodlines, but also free of Moorish impurities. The claim of blue blood or pure blood connects to whiteness as well in the sense that blue veins are more prominent in pale white skin. Hence the idea of blue bloods, *sangre pura*, is classed in a sense that it is almost always linked to wealth and raced because it signifies whiteness and blood. While the idea of blue bloods, mechanized borders, and the selling of human (mainly indigenous and mestizo) organs may seem each a distinct problem and completely isolated from *mestizaje*, *Almanac* demonstrates that each of these issues intersect underneath a common ideology of human objectification and commodification.

Silko illustrates that the global capitalist system maintains and produces racialized, gendered, and sexualized hierarchies through dehumanization and the reduction of lives to usable and disposable body parts. *Almanac* shows the destructive qualities of hyper-commodification and consumption in her metaphoric and literal representations of human cannibalization. For instance, Tacho tells Menardo that “[b]lood was powerful, and therefore dangerous,” because “human beings should not see or smell fresh blood too often or they might be overtaken by frightening appetites” (336). Furthermore, according to Tacho, “[h]uman sacrifices were part of the worldwide network of Destroyers who fed off energy released by destruction” (336). Thus, Silko portrays the proliferation of a world that debases human life to consumable and commodifiable body parts that is not necessarily only European. Even the land has been mechanized into a dehumanizing force, as “bio-material” is produced and *harvested* from indigenous bodies to be consumed.

Trigg, a physically and sexually impaired businessman residing in Tucson, sells human organs taken from refugees crossing the border and the homeless inhabiting the city. Trigg is sexually aroused by blood and the human death surrounding him as he talks “obsessively about the absence of struggle as the ‘plasma donors’ were slowly bled to death pint by pint” (444). Yet to Trigg, the lives lost were simply “human debris. Human refuse. Only a few organs of sufficient quality for transplant use” (444). They are body parts whose only value is set by the “blood plasma and biomaterials market worldwide” (444). Mimicking the cannibalistic tendencies of the blue bloods and the Aztec elites, *Almanac* launches an attack on the immoral use of borders to degrade

human life and the fetishization of violence. Moreover, the border assists in the spread of the objectification and commodification of the human body as organs are picked, processed, and packaged to sell to the highest bidder. While Silko offers criticism of mestizaje, she pulls the focus away from a conversation solely on race onto a discussion where race, gender, and class intersect in an ideology of destruction. She places her reading of race, as a mechanism of subjugation, within a wider critique of imperialism and a global capitalist system that renders the world consumable, especially the constructed indigenous other. Within a process of commodity production where indigenous people become racialized objects, racialization becomes more than just a mechanism of nation making, but a symptom of – and in a sense fundamental to – a broader technique of imperialism as a force that devastates the human world and the environment.

As the nation state is constructed and white identities are reproduced, brown bodies are marginalized, erased, and consumed violently underneath structures of white supremacy – various times throughout the novel we see white bodies consuming ethnic bodies. In “Tribalism, Globalism, and Eskimo Television in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*,” Eva Cherniavsky contends that Silko's *Almanac* is a counter discourse to “the leveling and consumption of history as identity, understood as process of (re)signification that at once obliterates and reconstitutes in another register thing or person named” (Cherniavsky 3). In the neoliberal nation-state the conversion of the lived identity to a material and marketable good alludes to the ways in which indigenous identities are “rendered commodifiable” and “passively acquired” (Cherniavsky 2).

Mestizaje works within this economy of indigenous identity production as it enthusiastically positions the Indian as an object of desire. Thus where *Almanac* functions as a critique of the use of the native other to establish white/western subjectivity, Luis Urrea's *The Hummingbird's Daughter* is a text that arises out of the desire to conserve the western subject.

Silko pulls our attention to the ways in which “blood madness” functions within a larger ideology of destruction, held and reproduced by Europeans and indigenous people alike. Throughout the novel, the ancient almanac remains a symbol of tribal knowledge and a beacon for tribal people's perseverance and survival. The almanac presumably begins its journey in the hands of an unnamed Mayan tribe in Mesoamerica and makes its way north before eventually falling into the hands of the Yaqui twins, Lecha and Zeta. The almanac's survival relies on trans-tribal solidarity, and it is significant that it lands in the hands of the Yaqui of Sonora as they historically have, and contemporarily remain, a symbol for indigenous resistance. Nevertheless, Silko does not idealize intertribal camaraderie, as she vehemently contests the idealized vision of the imperial Aztecs adopted as the archetype of Indigeneity by Chicana/os and Mexican nationalists. Harkening back to Silko's first novel, *Ceremony*, in which she narrates the creation of the destroyers by native sorcerers, Yoeme alleges that, “the Aztecs ignored the prophecies and warnings about the approach of the Europeans because Montezuma and his allies had been sorcerers who had called or even invented the European invaders with their sorcery” (Silko 570). This warning is a direct knock at Chicana/o nationalism's romanticized vision of the Aztec nation. Furthermore, she tells a story of indigenous migration that

speaks directly against that of the mythic Aztlán in the Southwest United States: “Those who worshiped destruction and blood secretly knew one another. Hundreds of years earlier, the people who hated sorcery and bloodshed had fled north to escape the cataclysm prophecied when the ‘blood worshipers’ of Europe met the ‘blood worshipers’ of the Americas” (Silko 570). Connecting white pure bloods’ depravity to imperial Aztec “blood worshipers,” Silko not only unsettles an essentialist dichotomy, but also disrupts Chicana/o and Mexico nationalistic discourse. Moreover, Silko refers to a Mesoamerica – the cradle of Mexican and Chicana/o nationalism – already classed under the imperial rule of the Aztecs, as they bled the people dry economically, spiritually, and literally. Here Silko again links issues of blood and destruction together and connects mestizaje and colonial destruction within the ideologies of global capitalism and racism.

The allusion to a cannibalistic tradition in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, moreover, invokes a discussion of ideologies that revel in human destruction that breaks from a European/Native dichotomy and challenges discourses of dehumanizing cultural authenticity and hybridity. Part two of the novel, titled “Mexico,” begins with the “Reign of Death-Eye Dog,” and the Mestizo, Menardo. The Reign of Death-Eye Dog refers to the last 500 years and the current era. It measures from the arrival of the Spanish to the present day. The Reign of Death-Eye Dog references Aztec mythology and the god of death, Xolotl, often represented as a dog-like figure in Aztec codexes. More interestingly, the god Mictlanteculhltli, linked to dog imagery, is a king of the underworld and associated with the ritualistic consumption of human flesh. These connections to pre-Columbian writings place *Almanac* firmly within a long native literary tradition in the

Americas. In this sense *Almanac* is in discussion with, and critical of, colonial and pre-colonial texts. For example, in the “Journey of the Almanac,” four children carry the Ancient Almanac north in hope of preserving their tribe’s knowledge and survival. On their journey north they encounter a tribeless old Indian woman who attempts to literally consume (ingest) the ancient Almanac and eventually ends up eating one of the little girls. Yoeme warns that, “[t]he reign of Death-Eye Dog is marked by people like her. She did not start out that way. In the days that belong to Death-Eye Dog, the possibility of becoming like her trails each one of us” (253). The story warns tribal peoples of the dangers of becoming one of the destroyers and losing tribal connections.

Almanac further centers blood as fundamental to the struggle of indigenous liberation. On the opening page Zeta is dyeing clothes the color of blood while Ferro cleans pistols in preparation for war. They are at war against the colonial and capitalist forces at hand, personified perhaps most obviously in the blue bloods, the *sangre puras*, Beaufrey, Serlo, and Mr. Fish. A white European puritan, Mr. Fish is “a cannibal and a child molester” (554). His family “had been blue bloods directly off the *Mayflower*” (534). Beaufrey is completely infatuated with fulfilling his own desires. They both rely on the consumption of human bodies (in multiple senses of the word) and share the “complete indifference about the life or death of other human beings” (534). Mr. Fish is literally sustained by his consumption of human flesh. Beaufrey is possessed with images of human degradation and the objectification of the body. He profits from selling bootlegged videos of staged abortions and sex changes on the black market to those concerned with getting off on “authentic” human suffering. Beaufrey posits that the

destruction of human flesh has always been linked to power, and that “[m]embers of European aristocracy were simply more inclined to hunger and crave human flesh and blood because centuries of *le droit du seigneur* had corrupted them absolutely” (535). *Le droit de seigneur* refers to a belief in the rights of a medieval lord to have sex with their serfs’ single and virgin daughters. Thus, in Beaufrey’s musings a patriarchal system that objectified women leads to the idea that those in power are entitled to dehumanize and devalue human beings. *Le droit de seigneur* and *sangre pura* interpolates a history of sadistic acts committed because of blue blood inbreeding and the unmediated access to human flesh. Silko emphasizes the irony that generations of inbreeding create mental illness and physical disabilities in a supposedly pure and “superior” group of people. Unfortunately, the literal madness that resulted from blood obsession resulted in the violent oppression of human beings. Beaufrey believes that “[t]here was nothing in the world that money could not buy. Beaufrey was especially interested in things, places, or beings that were not for sale; he got a thrill out of what was unavailable or forbidden” (535). Beaufrey’s reflections imply a historical and ideological relationship between the objectification of Victorian women and a cannibalistic capitalist system. Moreover, his obsession with the “unavailable” symbolizes how capitalism creates desire that universalizes objectification and render everything commodifiable; a world in which public images of “sentimentality over infants and small children” displace a reality where “these same infants had their heads smashed,” because after all “they were the private property of their fathers” (536). The violence that results from complete

commodification and objectification of human life suggests that social hierarchies are intimately connected.

Serlo's desires reflect the aspirations of power and suggests that power works through, or at least manifests itself in, the complete objectification of human life. Serlo dreams of creating "alternative earth units" that orbit the earth so that the pure bloods would be "capable of remaining cut off from earth for years if necessary while the upheaval and violence threatened those of superior lineage" (543). According to Serlo the most important thing in the world is the purity of one's biological lineage. He "had dedicated himself to a cause" of creating the "proper genetic balance" in the human race (541). Reminiscing on lessons from his uncles, he recalls years earlier that his uncles laughed after "they had raped six or seven young Indian women, not because they had been lustful men, they were not, but because they believed it was their God-given duty to 'upgrade' mestizo and Indian bloodstock" (541). Here Serlo directly links *mestizaje* to a practice of racial superiority and sexual violence. Reminiscent of the *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, Serlo's uncles disregard the girls humanity beyond their ability to act as vessels for the men's pure blood. Connecting a racialized and gendered colonial violence to the (pseudo)science of eugenics, Serlo dreams of taking his uncle's visions even further through the use of technology. He studies eugenics in hopes of creating the technology that would allow men to take the woman out of the reproductive process all together. Yet, while Serlo, Beaufrey, and Mr. Fish personify capitalism as colonialism, in their most extreme forms, *Almanac* does not re-inscribe a Euro-centric binary approach to power.

YAQUI (NOT MESTIZO) SISTERS

The Yaqui twin sisters challenge conceptions of indigeneity figured in a system of racial hierarchies, blood, and defy colonial representations of the stoic “noble savage.” On the surface the two are mestizos, as their grandfather and father are both European and their grandmother is Yaqui. Yet, within the text they are not characterized by being mixed blood, and their Yaqui identity is generally uncontested. Zeta can speak to snakes and Lecha is able to communicate with the spirit world in order to locate and retrieve the victims of bloodthirsty serial killers. Typically, this would suggest a reproduction of colonial tropes reflective of imperialistic nostalgia, but the two are not collapsed around these abilities. Zeta rages a war against the racial, physical, and socio-political borders between the United States and Mexico. Lecha uses her *gift* for economic gain. Together Silko’s representation of these two Yaqui sisters subverts racialized indigeneity, and notions of cultural and ethnic authenticity.

Under further investigation their “mystic” and “exotic” abilities, that could fetishize them as commodifiable tropes, become political and economic tools of indigenous survival. Lecha and Zeta, along with every other indigenous character in *Almanac*, “are avowedly impure, non-organic, and non innocent” (Cherniavky 1). They do not conform to mainstream, essentialist blood discourse. Yoeme fervently disapproved of Zeta’s job as a tour guide, and “made a big point of shaming those who would sell the last few objects of the people who had been destroyed and worlds that had been destroyed by the Europeans” (128). Additionally, Zeta is violently ruthless in her war against the U.S. government. Lecha’s profits from appearing on the TV show come

from the commodification of human loss and the objectification of suffering.

Additionally, while she assists in the battle against the destroyers by helping in the arrest of blood obsessed serial killers, she also exploits grieving families by taking advantage of her “high Indian cheekbones and light brown skin” that “give her an exotic quality that televisions news desperately needs” (Silko 141, 147). The fact that Lecha capitalizes on imperial imaginations of the colonized Other, speaks to the ways in which Silko’s text speaks against “ethnonationalisms, and their sustaining rhetoric of cultural purity” (Cherniavsky 1). For instance, Lecha’s body is *tainted* with drugs, and when she arrives back at the ranch in order to transcribe and analyze the ancient *almanac* she has to be as high as the thin “air current[s] a hawk might ride” in order to function (Silko 245). The scene disrupts the stereotypical native vision quest that reproduces images of exotic, mythic Indians. Instead of just a romanticized spiritual revival, Lecha gets high to maintain indigenous survival and resistance. Nevertheless, as an impure drug addict the People still give her the responsibility of not just protecting, but contributing to the sacred text that is vital to tribal sovereignty and survival.

Within the text, the “Indian way” is not an imperially produced notion, but dynamic and constantly evolving depending on tribal needs. Zeta, for example, uses old women and children to draw suspicion away from her vehicle when smuggling. One “widow did not think it was the Indian way to use an old woman and a little child as her “cover” for the business of crossing the border” (Silko 133-134). The image pokes fun at the stereotype of passive and docile old Indian women, full of infinite wisdom, yet harmless to white society and easily appropriated. As far as Zeta is concerned,

the People had been freed to go traveling north and south for a thousand years, traveling as they please, then suddenly white priests had announced smuggling as a mortal sin because smuggling was stealing from the government...Zeta wondered if the priests who told the people smuggling was stealing had also told them how they were to feed themselves now that all the fertile land along the rivers had been stolen by white men.

(133)

The text posits an intimate association between the priest and the power of the state. This is because the policing of morality, sexuality, and movement of indigenous people by the mission system in colonial Mexico was fundamental to the construction of the Mexican nation's state. Yet more significant, Zeta is not concerned with existing as an authentic Indian or fetishizing a static Indian identity as is often done within Mestizo discourses. Her "aunties and dirty-fingered uncles despised what they called "Indians" until it suited them; then suddenly the "Indian way" was all-important if and when the "Indian way" worked to their advantage" (133). Zeta, on the other hand, is occupied with the subjugation of indigenous people by the state and even partakes in questionable practices when necessary to smuggle and subvert state power.

The "Indian way" centers tribal survival. For instance, the almanac exists outside of European objectification and obsession; it is not locked away in a museum like the sacred stone objects from the Laguna tribe. Utilizing intertribal communications and commerce that does not rely on dehumanizing borders the almanac is sent to the "tribes far, far to the North"(246). Again, it is critical to note that Silko does not idealize tribal

people as completely different from Europeans. The children are advised to be wary of “slave catchers” and petition villages that “were not afraid to associate with fugitives” (Silko 246). Moreover, Yoeme did not tell Lecha much about the notebooks except for mentions about their origins. The notebooks are not necessarily Pre-Colombian, but perhaps made from “primitive parchment the Europeans taught the native Americans to make” (Silko 246). This is significant, because in the storying of the “Journey of the Ancient Almanac” Silko refuses to romanticize a Pre-Colombian past or fall into “the supremacist notion” that anything Post-Contact is always already “contaminated” by European presence, or “that Indian resistance has never occurred in such a fashion that things European have been radically subverted by Indians” (Womack 12). Like Lecha the almanac is not a “pure” indigenous artifact. Yet, The notebooks are essential to tribal survival as “the people knew if even part of their almanac survived, they as a people would return someday” (Silko 246). Furthermore, Yoeme states that it is essential that the ancient Almanac have passages written in English in order to fully represent tribal knowledges. Thus, the Almanac is not reduced to an anthropological object. It has a past and story, but it is not just a relic – it is constantly supplemented and reinterpreted.

Tribal people must constantly shape and form it to aid in tribal sovereignty and survival.

Silko relies on concrete and regionally specific tribal contexts throughout the novel. Moreover, in *Almanac* “native literary aesthetics” are politicized as “autonomy, self-determination, and sovereignty” and are seriously considered as Silko “emphasizes Native resistance movements against colonialism” and “confronts racism” (Womack 11). The girl’s socialization into tribal (Yaqui) knowledge, for instance, is not marked by a

romantic spiritual rebirth but is overtly and radically political. Upon Yoeme's return to claim the two girls as Yaqui, for example, the girls are taught the truth behind Yoeme's departure and the "killing [of] Indians right and left" (116). Yoeme makes sure that the girls understand that their grandfathers and father's *incursion* into the Rio Yaqui, "was war! It was white men coming to find more silver, to steal more Indian land" (116). Likewise, the historical and sociological realities of indigenous nations are central. During the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century Mexican government was insistently implementing a policy of deportation of Yaqui people to the Yucatan. The Yaqui people were seen as an obstacle, physically and ideologically, to the capitalist investors who desired the Rio Yaqui and the mestizo and *yori* Mexican government looking to establish the Mexican state as an industrial force. In this genocidal war, the Mexican military killed people just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. This included and at times especially meant women, as they were seen as the transmitters of Yaqui culture and, in the eyes of the Mexican government, *yori* contempt. The gendered female body was seen as the literal sight of reproduction for enemies of the state. For example, Coronel Angel Garcia Pena wrote that the "principals enemigos es la mujer Yaqui. Y no cabe dude, pues la madre que es la que forma los primeros elementos de educacion del nino, les engendra desde que principia a tener la primera nocio de las cosas, el odio al Yori" (Troncoso 128). Furthermore, the removal of Yaquis meant an influx of white settlers into the Rio Yaqui and the eight villages, and opened the doors to the human and environmental exploitation in the region. Additionally, it meant an increase in *inter racial* marriages – especially among the Mayos

(Moctezuma 2001; Spicer 1980). Appropriately, scenes of Yoeme life in the Rio Yaqui reflect and address these realities.

The twin's grandmother, Yoeme, is a polysemic character in a sense that she is not only a keeper and guardian of prophecies and tribal knowledge, but also her name Yoeme is the name for the Yaqui language, and Yo'eme means literally "the People" in the Yaqui language. Thus in the novel, Yoeme signifies the character Yoeme, the relentless warrior for tribal survival and the grandmother of Zeta and Lecha, while simultaneously signifying the Yaqui tribe more generally. In Zeta and Lecha's "Childhood in Mexico," Yoeme appears one day while the two sisters are "playing with the other children" (Silko 114). The twins noticed that "the old woman" approaching "was an Indian," before she stopped at "their gateway," and "in a clear voice as strong as Auntie Popa's," said "*You* are Indians!" (114 original emphasis). Yet, Yoeme does not acknowledge "their cousins," her other grandchildren (114). Later we learn that Yoeme returned because of the twins. She had been waiting "to see if any of [her] grandchildren might have turned out human" (118). Here the twin's identities are not inscribed in biological terms, as Yoeme sees no nexus between her other grandchildren and The People. Supporting this point is the fact that Zeta "thought of Grandpa Guzman not as her grandpa but as the 'old white man,' which was what others, outside the family, called him" (130). Not only does Yoeme's actions undermine racialized notions of indigeneity, but the apparent dehumanization of the other children acknowledges Yaqui tribal specificity as Silko defers to the Yaqui people's ability to determine their own citizenship

and kinship. In other words, these are chosen families based on necessity within tribal affiliation and blood.

Like Cayetana in Urrea's *Hummingbird*, Yoeme leaves her children and walks away. However, the exodus is not characterized as a passive departure, but centralized in the text as an act of defiance and indigenous endurance. Yoeme was married to Guzman "to make sure he kept the agreement" struck between him and the Yaqui after the incursion of white men began "coming to find more silver" and "steal more Indian land" (116). Yet "Guzman had been only a gutless, walking corpse, not a real man" as he refused to uphold his end of the bargain and "stand up to the other white men streaming into the country" and killing Indians (116-117). In a moment of Yaqui knowledge production, Yoeme clarifies to Zeta and Lecha why she left.

The fucker Guzman, your grandfather, sure loved trees. They were cottonwoods got as saplings from the banks of the Rio Yaqui. Slaves carried them hundreds of miles. The heat was terrible. All water went to the mules or to the saplings. The slaves were only allowed to press their lips to the wet rags around the tree roots. After they were planted at the mines and even here by this house, there were slaves who did nothing but carry water to those trees. 'What beauties!' Guzman used to say. By then they had no more 'slaves.' They simply had Indians who worked like slaves but got even less than slaves had in the old days...They had been killing Indians right and left. It was war! It was white men coming to find more silver, to steal more Indian land...So you see, when I decided to

leave that fucker Guzman and his weak children, your mother was the weakest, I had on last thing I had to do...It was one of the best things I have ever done! Sooner or later those long turds would have ridden up with their rifles to hang me from the big cottonwood tree...Yoeme had waited until Guzman had gone off to buy mules in Morelos, and then she had ordered the gardeners to get to work with axes. (116-118)

Again, the reader sees the negation of the stereotypical meek and submissive Indian woman through Yoeme's vulgar language. Yoeme's story does not so much go directly against the version Zeta and Lecha received from their mom as it offers another interpretation. The trees – that also signify Yaqui pain as the Mexican military utilized cottonwoods to hang Yaquis – are taken from the Yaqui territory are objectified and rendered commodifiable. Furthermore, the removal of the trees signify total disregard for Yaqui autonomy and should be read as not just a breach of contract, but as an invasion and an act of war.

The significance of the Rio Yaqui to Yaqui cultural survival and tribal sovereignty cannot be overstated. Since the advent of liberalism in Mexico, the Yaqui have been combating the theft of their water; they are still fighting as the increasing privatization of public water continues devalue Yaqui human life in Sonora. These issues cannot be separated from Yaqui sovereignty and indigenous rights more broadly. Moreover, the cottonwood trees are prized possessions for Guzman, yet for Yoeme they signify destruction. Not only are human Indian lives objectified and deemed disposable, they serve as a constant reminder that Yoeme, and The People, are at war with forces that

takes people and makes them into “objects hanging in the beautiful green leaves and branches along the river” (117). Yoeme’s story of departure portrays Indians as objectified bodies, treated as dehumanized labor. They become commodities, worth less than the trees they carry.

Yet, Yoeme’s story is not about an indigenous woman failing to do her duty as a mother, nor was Cayetana’s leaving. Yet Cayetana’s leaving functioned more as a passing happenstance an unfortunate yet necessary plot development reflective of a lack of sexual or sovereign bodily power for Indian women. Yoeme’s leaving was deliberate, and a very Yaqui thing to do (Padilla Ramos *Los Irredentos Parias*). During times of war and during great stress, mothers often decided to leave their children with family members, or did whatever was necessary in order to help their children be free from Spanish and Mestizo subjugation (Padilla Ramos *Los Irredentos Parias*). The same could be said in Cayetana’s case. When Yoeme returned she “slept on the porch glider until the winter rains came, and then she had moved into the old cook-shed behind the big house,” because her children “wanted the dirty Indian” away from the house (115). The source of this contempt is that Yoeme, “the she coyote had run off leaving the smallest ones, Ringo and Federico, sobbing and running down the road after her” (114). Do not forget that Cayetana was Tehueco and Mayo, two tribes distinct from the Yaqui yet very culturally similar. Historically, Yaqui women leaving their children, for the betterment of the tribe, resistance, or an act of survival, was common (Padilla Ramos *Los Irredentos Parias*). This is especially true in the case of *coyotes* – warriors sworn to protect the tribe at all costs; a role not exclusively male. Yoeme is called a “she-coyote.” Coming from

her children and the *yorí*, it is launched as an insult. The signification is different when you consider briefly the role of *coyotes* in Yaqui society. *Coyotes* are charged with protecting the tribe during times of crises and war and are the keepers and guardians of knowledge vital to the survival of The People. From adolescence those chosen to become *coyotes* are taught ancient escape routes and sanctuaries in the Sierra Mountains. Customarily *coyotes* are not permitted to marry or have children, as it would create a conflict of interest during emergencies when *coyotes* are expected to put the tribe first. Thus as a *coyote*, Yoeme's abandonment of her children, particularly in a time of war, would be expected. This is not to condone or demonize Yoeme's actions but the point is this: unlike Urrea's novel, Silko's politicized aesthetics do not celebrate *mestizaje*, nor is it produced out of rape. It begins and ends with an indigenous women taking on and protecting the safety of the whole tribe, hence her name Yoeme.

All of this is not so much to pull the focus away from a critique of *mestizaje*, but to highlight what I consider a more productive indigenist discourse in which *mestizaje* is not just ignored but deconstructed, not so much for the sake of nuance, but for a blatant critique of nationalistic imperialism and its dehumanizing counterpart, capitalism.

Yoeme has seven children with Guzman and is disappointed that all seven children "take after the father" (117). The disappointment here relates to *Almanac's* critique of the objectification of human identities and the ways in which bodies and lives get destroyed and consumed within the world of the destroyers. Central to this criticism is the reoccurring metaphor of objects being consumed – in multiple senses of the word – by being eaten, destroyed, utilized, or by becoming an object of complete objectified desire

for a character. The vomiting we often see in Silko's work that is not found just in *Almanac* is related to these images of consumption. In *Ceremony* the protagonist Tayo is constantly throwing up as he tries to eject whiteness from his body. Similarly Zeta and Lecha's mom, Amelia, has stomach pains and repeatedly throws up: "from the bedroom inside they could hear their mother fumble for the enamel basin to vomit blood" (119). Like in *Ceremony*, the sickness is connected to internal and external trauma as Tayo was coming back from war, and Amelia grew up in a war zone. Yet there is more to the metaphor. In one sense, her mestizo body is consumed – in the destructive sense – by blood. Yet on another, and perhaps more significant level, her body is rejecting the ingestion (consumption) of blood. Her flesh refuses to be reduced and defined in blood; blood, flesh, cannot be consumed. It is not a commodity. In Luis Urrea's *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, *mestizaje* is objectified in a cup. Cayetana drinks "yesterday's grinds," diluted by milk. In this sense, not only is Cayetana classed through *mestizaje*, but the milk (read white) *dilutes* the Indian portrayed as weakened and in the past; Cayetana is unable to do anything but drink it. Silko and Urrea's pictures are strikingly different. Urrea mourns the loss of the *Indio* within the cup. Silko's Indians refuse to be consumed.

Conclusion

Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* illustrates how global capital reduces human beings to commodities, objects, labor, and blood. Furthermore, her book foresees the increasingly militarization of the border and the wide dispersion of a racialized immigration and immigrant imaginary. As part of the imperial project, nationalistic discourses circulate images that dehumanize brown bodies and refashion violence against indigenous people as patriotic, good for the country (both U.S. and Mexico), and moral. In such case, it is imperative that literary discourses coming from indigenous, Chicana/o, Latina/o, and Mexican American communities remain conscious of racialized discourses that, when employed, can reproduce the social perceptions that cause degradation, pain, and suffering. *Mestizaje* remains a striking example of these imperialistic discourses mobilized by mainstream populations.

Mestizaje is part of a colonial inscribed system of racial, gender, and class hierarchies. The continual colonial project relies on these forms of subjugation. Furthermore, *mestizaje* arises out of and reproduces notions of race that include racial purity and white supremacy. Ideas of racial purity perpetuate ideologies of racism and sexism that leads to things such as slavery and genocide. The post-revolutionary Mexican government utilized *mestizaje* as a ways to create a new national identity. However, their appropriation of an indigeneity based in not just biological terms, but also a fetishized Indian, demonstrates how indigenous peoples were further reified within the new system. As a narrative of *mestizaje* and Chicana/o *indigenismo*, *The Hummingbird's Daughter* reproduces these same tropes of indigenous erasure. On the other hand,

Almanac of the Dead launches a relentless attack on colonial representations of indigeneity, *mestizaje* being just one of those significations. Silko maps the collapsing of indigeneity to biology in a wider system of capitalistic destruction where everything is commodified and acquirable. Yet, *Almanac* transcends the duality of European versus Indigenous and the issues of racial purity and authenticity it implies. Further concerning the deconstruction of a binary approach to colonialism and domination is the fact that “the destroyers” are not solely European, but Mestizo, and indigenous as well. In fact, the original destroyers to reside in the Americas were the imperialistic Aztecs, debunking the egalitarian mythology of harmony espoused by Chicana/o nationalists. Within *Almanac*, tribal peoples reclaim native lands and resist the commercialization of humanity and the planet.

Almanac engages in conversation with some of the main academic debates taking place in the United States: blood, identity, tribal sovereignty, land, and the commodification of Tribal identities and culture. Yet she also makes some very specific critiques in regards to issues that Chicana/os, Mexican-Americans, and Latina/os are often concerned with. For example, she addresses problems of dehumanizing border policies, racialized marginalization, and sexualized violence. Silko’s novel goes into Mexico and engages extensively in a critique of *mestizaje*. Furthermore, she chooses to center Yaqui and Mayan characters as leaders for the “Indian wars,” to move beyond nuanced discussions of dichotomies and hybridity. What Silko shows is that the area considered the borderlands is a multilingual, multicultural space that encompasses/contains more than just two cultures. The region is home to Apache, Yaqui,

and Pueblo nations, to name a few. These nations fight for autonomy and cultural survival every day. Moreover, there are multiple indigenous languages spoken. However most significant to the discussion of Chicana/o *indigenismo*, the fact that Silko converses with issues of *mestizaje*, Mexico's oppressive policies towards Mexican Indians, and the border illustrate that Silko identifies the shortcomings of approaching Chicana/o and American Indian issues as solely separate issues.

My critique of *mestizaje* is not to deny Chicana/o indigeneity, but to deny one that privileges ideas such as authenticity and purity. Chicana/o's, Latina/os, and Mexican-Americans are indigenous. Yet it is dangerous and ill advised to simply adopt an identity that was established in the name of a nation state and economic progress; an identity that was fabricated to construct a Mexican citizen. Chicana/o and Mexican nationalism market *mestizaje* as inclusive but in reality *mestizaje* has historically been and continues to be a narrative of erasure for indigenous people. In many ways *Mestizaje* undermines indigenous peoples political struggle for land.

My hope is that my thesis addresses a "communication gap" which is not necessarily a question of shoving two fields together, but that putting two novels together that do similar things can bring to light underexplored issues. *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and *Almanac* imagine what it means to be indigenous. More specifically, both of the novels go into Mexico and construct stories around and about indigenous Yaqui women. Yoeme and her Yaqui granddaughters inhabit the world conscious of history, and as full actors in the present. Cayetana, on the other hand, seems destined to pass away in an ever diluted Mexico full of echo's from Tenochtitlan. Both novels appropriate Cahita

identities and explicitly address *mestizaje*. Yet, Urrea mediates Mexican identity, and the Mexican nation state, through the lens of *mestizaje*. Silko on the other hand contests the image of a Mexico defined by *mestizaje*, and instead locates the Mestizo identity within an economy of indigenous erasure and consumption. What is baffling about *The Hummingbird's Daughter* is that Urrea's text is based on twenty years of historical research that includes ethnographic interviews, yet Urrea seems to always be negotiating specific local histories with the myth of the Mestizo nation-state.

Native American, Mexican-American, Latina/o, and Chicana/o literary analysis and discourses must do better than idealizing a fabricated and romanticized indigenous past that ignores racist and sexist mentalities. Moreover, conversations between marginalized groups are productive. I believe that reading *Almanac* and *Hummingbird's Daughter* together highlights this. Again, *Almanac's* conceptualization of indigeneity is not flawless. At times the novel repackages the United States infamous "Melting Pot," in its dreams of re-indigenizing the Americas. Though I do believe it strives to find a middle ground. The novels' various indigenous characters struggle with whether or not the disappearance of the Europeans in the Americas will come by force or as a consequence of the increasing number of indigenous people. Nevertheless, *Almanac* critiques the objectification of the world and attempts to be overtly political in a sense that it centers an image of an indigenous America.

In contrast, Luis Urrea depoliticizes Teresa's story by privileging the exceptionalism of hybridity and the redemption of white characters. In this sense, Urrea refashions the capitalistic individual. This is not to say that Silko's Yaqui characters are

not individuals. But Silko struggles to make them more than props in an exoticized and romanticized indigenous world. They do not simply melt into a racialized or gendered representation by any means – neither does Teresa. But the point is this: where Urrea seems to be more invested in telling a story that cements Chicana/o indigeneity at the expense of other Native people, Silko imagines a world where Native characters exist in the modern world. Disregarding commodifiable notions of purity and authenticity, her characters appropriate whatever they need to construct a space where they can be Indian and fully human.

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