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Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

Bernie J. Canteñs and Carlos Alberto Sánchez, Co-Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

This issue begins with the winner of the 2011 APA Prize in Latin American Thought, John Kaiser Ortiz's "Octavio Paz and the Universal Problem of Mexican Solitude." The essay examines and highlights the "philosophical" import of Paz's famed *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. Arguing that "Paz's account of Mexican solitude . . . stands to challenge North American and European philosophical thinkers and their ideas of selfhood," the essay represents a renewed interest in Mexican existentialism and, much more importantly, an emerging interest in the confrontation between Mexican thinkers and their European and North American counterparts. Ortiz insists on Paz's value for philosophy and on the value of Paz's idea of "universal human identity," which Ortiz finds useful in our attempts to understand the most serious of our current social crises.

Next, Elena Ruíz-Aho, in "Theorizing Multiple Oppressions Through Colonial History: Cultural Alterity and Latin American Feminisms," argues persuasively that the fundamental philosophical issues affecting post-colonial Latin American women are unique, and, more importantly, the categories that frame their understanding and analysis of the philosophical problems are not symmetrical with the categories of North American feminists' theories. She argues that the incommensurability of these two feminists' paradigms is primarily caused by the "historical situatedness" of Latin America, that is, its unique history of repression, oppression, colonialism, patriarchy, racism, violence, discrimination, and marginalization, particularly of women. Insensitivity to the historical and cultural differences between North America and Latin America, and the coercive imposition of traditional, Western paradigms to Latin American philosophical issues results in yet another layer of oppression and silencing of voices, especially those of indigenous women. Ruíz-Aho argues that part of the answer is an "increased attentiveness to both the powerful asymmetries that exist between differently situated speakers in cultures as well as to how those differences are shaped by history."

In "Applying Latina Feminist Philosophical Approaches to the Self to Reinterpret Anti-Immigrant Politics in America," Edwina Barvosa dissects contemporary immigration issues, particularly the recent anti-immigration hostilities and sentiments expressed by white Americans against Latinos, through the lens of a contemporary Latina feminist's philosophical concepts of the self. She uses a feminist's multiple conception of the self, characterized as essentially contradictory and fragmentary, to reveal the real causes of the rise in anti-immigration sentiment of white Americans. Her analysis turns the tables on conventional studies in this area of research by focusing on identity issues and crises of white

Americans rather than Latino/a immigrants. She argues that the American Dream narrative, melancholia, and collective trauma cause identity contradictions, self-fragmentation, self-alienation in white American consciousness, and these identity crises, along with external triggers such as the economic downturn, are the driving forces of the irrational attitude white Americans adopt on immigration policies and unjust behavior they exhibit toward immigration issues.

Finally, Jennie M. Luna's essay, "Building a Xicana Indígena Philosophical Base," continues the theme of the present issue. In it, Luna explores the history and significance of "the struggle for self-determination" that Xicanas face and have faced. She introduces the term "Xicana Indígena," and argues that it "decrees a departure from older, nationalist notions of Chicano identity and insists on a firm declaration of indigeneity." Concerned with the pervasiveness of coloniality in the modern world, Luna deploys the full arsenal of feminist and de-colonial theorists in an effort to "build" a "philosophical base" for Xicana Indígena identity.

ARTICLES

Octavio Paz and the Universal Problem of Mexican Solitude

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Introduction

Although recent scholarship in Latin American philosophy has sensibly focused on the immigration debate in the United States by scrutinizing legal and moral requirements of citizenship, one area that remains unexplored is how the lived experience of immigration can be seen as contributing to new conceptions of what it means to be a human being in today's world. The preponderance of human movement and travel across the globe invite theorizations of selfhood and identity understood beyond national or hemispheric perspectives. Indeed, the task of theorizing universal human identity is urgently needed.

For Octavio Paz, the lived experience of immigrants, the violence non-citizens face in their adopted countries, and the proliferation of warfare between nations are illustrations (forms) of the solitude all human beings face. Although these forms of solitude (e.g., personal, national, and universal) each bear on one's identity differently, Paz sees these particular experiences of solitude as cause for theorizing universal selfhood. Paz's account of dissimilar experiences of Mexican solitude not only reveals differences in lived experience between one person and

the next; these differences are themselves taken as sufficient reason for their leading to a conception of universal human identity. Paz admits that one's experience of solitude will vary according to place and circumstance, but Paz's broadened conception of selfhood might help humanize the immigration debate in this country to focus less on what it means to be accepted as an American citizen and more on what kinds of rights one should be extended by virtue of being a human being alive in a globally shared world.

Octavio Paz is not typically seen as a philosopher, but his writings clearly demonstrate what Jorge Gracia calls ethnic philosophy. "Ethnic philosophies," Gracia argues, "understood as past ideas expressed in texts, are historical entities enmeshed in a variety of relations which make possible their classification in various ways."¹ Gracia's claim is framed by the question of inclusion, e.g., what counts as Latin American philosophy. As I see it, Gracia's notion of ethnic philosophy invites discussion of what I am calling Paz's philosophy of self, i.e., his account of the nature of selfhood. In *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (*El Laberinto de la Soledad*, 1950; hereafter *Labyrinth*), Paz clearly set out to account for at least three distinct forms of selfhood framed in terms of national identity: 1) Mexican identity as known by Mexicans living in Mexico; 2) American and Mexican identity for Mexican-Americans living in the United States; and 3) universal human identity. Paz's treatment of these three forms of identity centers on the experience of solitude each form of identity engenders, and his movement between them establishes a paradigm for thinking about universal human identity.²

Paz's account of *Mexican solitude* sets the stage for his view of *Mexican selfhood* and in the process addresses two historical dilemmas for Latin American philosophy. First, Paz avoids the limitations of his predecessors Samuel Ramos and José Vasconcelos in their quests for theorizing *Mexicanidad*, i.e., authentic Mexican selfhood. Paz delivers where they fell short by explaining *Mexicanidad* in terms of its trans-Atlantic, universal fate rather than on biological, or psychological origins.³ Second, by ending the first chapter of *Labyrinth* with an appeal to ideals of selfhood and alterity witnessed during the Spanish Civil War, Paz reverses the direction of thought that has historically flowed univocally from Europe to the Americas. Paz literally places his identity profile of Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Americans, and all human beings in the shadows of war-ravaged Europe and up against the wall of a universalist, Existentialist analysis. Paz's account of Mexican solitude, then, stands to challenge North American and European philosophical thinkers and their ideas of selfhood, especially such claims as how the lived experience of solitude shapes one's sense of self.⁴

Paz's account of *Mexicanidad* begins with a portrait and philosophical defense of 1940s Los Angeles Mexican American youths (*pachucos*) written while he was living in Paris immediately following World War II. By focusing on Mexican lived experience in the United States, Paz was able to show that even when claims of citizenship are not in question (the *pachucos* are American-born), violence towards ethnic minorities is an enduring reality. That Paz wrote his portrayal of the *pachucos* in France is the first indication that he wanted to view Mexican (and American) national identity as forms of universal human identity. To be sure, Paz's movement between Mexico, Los Angeles, Paris, and Spain leads him to characterize the search for both Mexican and universal selfhood in terms of labyrinthine solitude. Labyrinthine solitude is a more elaborate map of human experience, I believe, than that described by contemporaries of Paz like French Existentialists Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus (I will return to this claim later). Through his account of the different forms of solitude, Paz can be shown to have in mind questions of

universal human identity, i.e., questions pertaining to what it means to be a human being living in today's world.

The problem of solitude as Paz sees it for all human beings is that it leads to the arrested development of an encumbered selfhood: our lived experience of the world (solitude) forms a labyrinth whose walls vex us in every direction. Paz's idea of transcendent solitude, introduced at the end of the first chapter of *Labyrinth*, implies, however, that he recognized the importance of changing the way in which selves in action witness and discuss lived experience. Paz cites his own experience in the Spanish Civil War. "In those faces . . . there was something like a desperate hopefulness, something very concrete and at the same time universal," Paz writes. Thus, "in every man there is the possibility of his being—or, to be more exact, of his becoming once again—another man."⁵ When seen in terms of the embattled claims over the legal status and social acceptance of immigrants today, Paz's account of solitude as it leads to a universal statement about who we are as selves in action deserves our consideration. More to the point, given contemporary political and epistemic conflicts in human relations, the task of seeing ourselves as related in a larger global context would seem to require something similar to Paz's analysis. Paz concludes *Labyrinth* by proposing a dialectic of solitude, viz., a view that sees solitude as a necessary part of a broad historical process of identity formation, one that also promises love and communion.⁶

Imagining a disgruntled and estranged Zoot Suitor lurking in the film noir shadows of post-war Paris indicates the curious movement Paz's philosophy of self undertakes. Paz replaces the terms used to critique conceptions of national identity within Mexico; he also challenges the historical dominance of European and North American over Mexican and Latin American thought and practice. Paz thereby redefines the focus of twentieth-century Mexican and Latin American social and political philosophy by relocating the physical place and human standpoint wherefrom questions of the nature of selfhood merge with personal, national, and universal human identity.

Two Views of *Mexicanidad*: Vasconcelos and Ramos

José Vasconcelos, author of *The Cosmic Race* (*La Raza Cósmica*, 1925), one-time Presidential candidate, and the Minister of Education under whose tenure the Mexican Muralist movement was spawned, based his account of *Mexicanidad* on the idea that the variegated climate, geographical diversity, and cultural pluralism of revolutionary Mexico would bring about the worldwide racial intermingling of all peoples. The historical evolution of its social and political history indicated that Mexico could serve as a locale for the universal historical process of miscegenation, or racial intermingling, that would give rise to the final evolution of human existence, a fifth race, the cosmic race. Vasconcelos' role in the historical development of *Mexicanidad* is significant, then, because he saw the biological fact of racial mixing in Mexico as the basis for a simultaneous shift in the form and content of Mexican *and* universal human identity. Vasconcelos clearly believed that Mexico would occupy a central role in the evolution of universal human existence.⁷ This process of racial fusion or racial harmonization was well under way by the 1900s.

"If the Revolution was a search and an immersion of ourselves in our origins and being," Paz writes in *Labyrinth*, "no one embodied this fertile, desperate desire better than José Vasconcelos, the founder of modern education in Mexico."⁸ Paz commends Vasconcelos for his attempts at universalizing Mexican experience, but he seems to find more insight into *Mexicanidad* with Ramos's work.⁹ Ramos' work "remains our only point of departure," Paz writes, "[giving] us an extremely penetrating description of the attitudes that make each one of

a closed, inaccessible being.”¹⁰ These terms personify Paz’s *pachuco* in the opening chapter of *Labyrinth*.

Almost twenty years earlier, in *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico (El Perfil del Hombre y la Cultura en México, 1934)*, Ramos claimed that an inferiority complex characterized Mexican selfhood. Ramos explains his thesis as being “that some expressions of Mexican character are ways of compensating for an unconscious sense of inferiority.”¹¹ Ramos was not suggesting that Mexicans were, in fact, inferior beings. Rather, Ramos claims that Mexicans suffered from a feeling of inferiority to such a degree that they could be described as having an internalized complex that prevented their growth and flourishing. Ramos emphasizes this distinction: “It is not that the Mexican is inferior, but that he *feels* inferior.”¹² Paz is himself critical of Ramos’ work on this point. From the same chapter featuring the *pachuco*, Paz claims he agrees “with Ramos that an inferiority complex influenced our preference for analysis,”¹³ but this perspective was limited for Paz in that it was excessively psychological in a manner that denied broader, universal connections between human beings and the lived experience they share in common.

In *Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude*, an interview with Claude Fell, Paz reminds us that “the Spanish generation of 1898 initiated the genre” of national character studies.¹⁴ He adds, “In Mexico, the reflection on these subjects began with Samuel Ramos” who “centered his description around the so-called inferiority complex and what compensated for it: machismo. Although not entirely wrong, his explanation was limited and terribly dependent on Adler’s psychological models.”¹⁵ While Paz would later conclude that *Labyrinth* “is a book of social, political, and psychological criticism,” this criticism, he says, “has no bearing on Ramos’ examination: he dwells on psychology; in my case psychology is but a way of reaching moral and historical criticism.”¹⁶ Paz clearly seeks his own addendum to the historical and philosophical development of *Mexicanidad*.

Paz’s Existentialist Account of Solitude

Paz’s visit to the United States that would motivate his writing of *Labyrinth* took place shortly after the speciously titled Zoot Suit Riots of June 1943.¹⁷ These riots were based on the mob-like aggression of hundreds of military servicemen who descended en masse to the Mexican neighborhoods of East Los Angeles wielding bats, chains, fist-a-cuffs, and other blood-spilling implements. Teenagers were dragged from public spaces and then they were bludgeoned, disrobed, and left in gutters as local police and civic leaders looked askance. These riots were egregious, brutal examples of racialized violence towards Mexican-Americans. Seen from a poet’s perspective, however, this episode might testify to a shorter twentieth-century version of the nineteenth-century invasion of Mexico by the United States.

Paz indicates his shift from Mexican to universal experience in the opening paragraph of *Labyrinth* when he claims “we cannot escape the necessity of questioning and contemplating ourselves.”¹⁸ That Paz opens *Labyrinth* by describing the process of self-discovery in adolescents betrays his concern with the universal dimensions of solitude, especially the formative role solitude plays in the development of one’s personal identity. This quickening of selfhood is framed in Existentialist terms. For Paz, “self-discovery is above all the realization that we are alone. It is the opening of an impalpable, transparent wall—that of our consciousness—between the world and ourselves.”¹⁹ Stated differently, the wall, or border, between Mexico and the United States impedes, but does not imprison Paz’s account of solitude as a path towards universal human identity. Yet, Paz appears conscious of the fact that he is crossing borders and

boundaries only recently erected. Using terms that could imply the river separating the United States and Mexico, Paz writes, “As he leans over the river of his consciousness, he asks himself if the face that appears there, disfigured by the water, is his own.”²⁰ By the time Paz began writing *Labyrinth*, he would have surely realized that 1948 marked the one hundred year anniversary of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.²¹

The *pachuco* complicates the relationship of solitude to selfhood. “The *pachuco* is the most important emblem in [*Labyrinth*]: in him and through him, Paz reads his own contradictions,” José Quiroga writes; “the *Pachuco* (sic) is, broadly speaking, a border figure, installed precisely at the fissure between two cultures and two modes of life.”²² The existential dilemmas of *pachucos* are thus a beginning for an account of universal human identity given that *pachucos* are one of the extreme forms Mexican national character assumes. Paz writes, “Whether we like it or not, these persons are Mexicans, are one of the extremes at which the Mexican can arrive.”²³ At the same time, Paz’s characterization of *pachucos* in terms of what he calls their “exasperated will-not-to-be” explains why the *pachuco* “denies both the society from which he originated and that of North America”; “when he thrusts himself outward,” Paz writes, “it is not to unite with what surrounds him but rather to defy it.”²⁴ Consequently, Paz’s attempt to translate Mexican solitude (and, more precisely, Mexican selfhood) into a form of universal human identity assumes a remarkable challenge to North American and European influence over questions of the nature of selfhood precisely because Paz treats the *pachuco*’s solitude in terms that also signify personal, national, and universal human identity. The *pachuco*’s self-denial allows Paz to re-dress the Mexican self in terms that now reflect the universal problem of solitude—a problem that exists for selves in action all over the world. Clearly, solitude is *sine qua non* for Paz’s attempted bridge between these disparate forms of identity.

Parallels with French Existentialism are revealing.²⁵ In Camus’s *The Stranger (L’Etranger, 1942)*, the title character Meursault lacks any emotional response to his mother’s death. By story’s end, a self-effacing revolt in Meursault’s worldview is revealed in an emboldened discussion with the prison chaplain. Their conversation centers on stones, particularly those stones forming the wall of Meursault’s cell. When the chaplain observes that “every stone here sweats with suffering,” Meursault explodes in anger, then surmises: “I said I had been looking at the stones in these walls for months. There wasn’t anything or anyone in the world I knew better.”²⁶ Whereas Paz envisions a multi-dimensional labyrinth, Camus’ wall is a one-dimensional obstacle to self-realization.²⁷ When pictured as a labyrinth, the solitude experienced by Paz’s self becomes incarcerating and acutely bewildering.²⁸ The walls of this solitude are not just in front of us or next to us, but surround us from all sides, including above and below. In other words, the *pachuco*’s experience of solitude is his experience of selfhood.²⁹

Mexican nationals are indistinguishable from their *pachuco* relatives living in the United States, according to Paz. However, the problem of identity for Mexican selves in action is not just a private matter, but concerns the ways in which North Americans and Europeans view Mexicans residing within and outside of Mexico. In Paz’s words, Europeans tend to view the Mexican “as an inscrutable being” who, like the *pachuco*, both “attract and repel.”³⁰ The parallels between European attitudes towards Mexicans mirrors that of North American attitudes towards immigrants today.³¹ “It is not difficult to understand the origins of this attitude toward us,” Paz explains; “The European considers Mexico to be a country on the margin of universal history, and everything that is distant from the center of his society strikes him as strange and impenetrable.”³² That this claim of difference

historically serves to condone violence and warfare is not a point lost on Paz.

Conclusion

Paz's work consistently focused on theorizing a form of universal human identity that grew out of Mexican, American, French, Spanish, and his own migrations, conflicts, and relations. Paz's philosophy of self defies North American and European models whose yoke has historically overshadowed the productions of Mexican and Latin American thinkers and writers. But if Paz's analysis of the *pachuco* redirects Mexican, Mexican American, and European identity towards a universal conception of selfhood, then it remains to be seen how Paz directs the movement of human beings towards a more inclusive (and expansive) notion of human identity, one that goes beyond the narrow confines of national identity. A focus on human rights might help amplify our conceptions and discussions of what qualifies one for being accepted or included in a given social community or body politic. Paz alludes to this point later in *Labyrinth* when he writes, "Ever since World War II we have been aware that the self-creation demanded of us by our national realities is no different from that which similar realities are demanding of others . . . we must join together in inventing our common future. World history has become everyone's task, and our own labyrinth is the labyrinth of all mankind."³³

My argument has been that Paz defines Mexican, Mexican American, North American, and European solitude in ways that connect questions of selfhood to universal human identity. Paz's account of solitude can be seen as a starting point for a view of universal human identity that seeks to broaden the connection between selves in action in a way that goes beyond cementing bonds between just two cultures or nations. Given Paz's account of the universal problem of Mexican, Mexican-American, Euro-American, and European solitude, one hope that surfaces at this point is that our identities as individuals and as members of a global species will be evaluated by our success in getting out from under the national, tunnel-like borders of our imprisoned identities, our beleaguered social ideals.

Endnotes

1. Jorge J.E. Gracia, "Ethnic Labels and Philosophy: The Case of Latin American Philosophy," *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, edited by Eduardo Mendieta (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 57-67.
2. Isaac Rosler has proposed that "Perhaps [*Labyrinth*] is the poetic trajectory of failed, individual and universal, identity." My view differs from Rosler's only in the sense that I do not think that Paz saw the experience of solitude as a failure. Instead, I read Paz as claiming that solitude is one extreme of lived experience that is antithetical to lived experiences of love and communion. See Isaac Rosler, "Paz and the 'Figure' of the Pachuco in *El Laberinto de la Soledad*," *Hispanic Journal* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 165-178.
3. Paz's account of *Mexicanidad* draws nonetheless from both Vasconcelos' revolutionary optimism and Ramos' post-revolutionary skepticism.
4. Scholars have implicated questions of universal human identity in terms of Mexican and Latin American thought and experience, particularly in their focus on Mexican immigrants living in the United States. Daniel Campos, for example, explains the lived experience of immigration through a lens framed by Peircean affectivity, or what he describes as "that dimension of human living experience in natural and social environments that encompasses feeling, emotion, sentiment, instinct, doubt, belief, and habit, among other affective elements." Paz's account of solitude and selfhood can easily be seen in these terms.
5. Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 28.

6. Paz was fundamentally concerned with the fate of universal human identity, a fate he argued could be redeemed through a philosophy of love that would transcend the historical problems of solitude. This project is Paz's focus in *The Double Flame*.
7. José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race / La raza cósmica*, trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997).
8. Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 152. Paz adds, "Vasconcelos, as a philosopher and a man of action, possessed that unity of vision which brings coherence to diverse plans, and although he sometimes overlooked details, he never lost himself in them."
9. Yvon Grenier claims that "for Paz the thought of Vasconcelos was in many ways no less crude and messianic than that of the positivists." See Yvon Grenier, "Octavio Paz and the Changing Role of Intellectuals in Mexico," *Discourse* 23.2 (Spring 2001): 141.
10. *Labyrinth*, 160.
11. Samuel Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, trans. Peter G. Earle (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 9.
12. *Profile*, 57.
13. *Profile*, 10.
14. *Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude*, 331.
15. *Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude*, 331.
16. *Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude*, 332.
17. See Mauricio Mazón, *The Zoot Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984); Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
18. *Labyrinth*, 11.
19. *Labyrinth*, 9.
20. *Labyrinth*, 9.
21. See David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 13. According to Gutiérrez, the treaty "ceded to the United States one-third of Mexico's territory—including Texas, more than half—which now comprises all or part of California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico."
22. José Quiroga, *Understanding Octavio Paz* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 69.
23. *Labyrinth*, 14.
24. *Labyrinth*, 17.
25. For purposes of brevity, I only raise the theme of walls in Camus' work. Sartre's *No Exit* also reveals a concern with solitude experienced in alienation or estrangement from our selves and others. Garcin asks the Valet what lies "beyond that wall," and the Valet responds "there's a passage." "And at the end of the passage?" asks Garcin. "There's more rooms, more passages, and stairs," replies the Valet. In *The Mandarins*, Simone de Beauvoir's character Anne encounters solitude in ways that recall *Labyrinth*. Anne describes her trip to New York: "They imprisoned me in overheated hotels, air-conditioned restaurants, solemn offices, luxurious apartments, and it wasn't easy to escape them. When they took me back to my hotel after dinner, I would quickly cross the lobby and leave by another door; I would get up at dawn and stroll through the streets before the morning session [of a conference]. But I didn't get much out of those moments of stolen freedom; I soon realized that in America solitude doesn't pay." See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Mandarins* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1954), 324; Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 6.
26. Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Matthew Ward (New York: Vintage, 1988), 118-119.
27. In an interview three days before he became a Nobel laureate in literature, Paz described his personal separation—sometimes by a single wall—of loyalists from fascists during

the Spanish Civil War. The circumstances were surrounded by violence. The experience “shattered many of [Paz’s] deepest convictions,” and led to an expansion of his ideas of fraternity by seeing that “they are the same as we on this side of the wall.” George Plimpton, edited by *Latin American Writers at Work: The Paris Review* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 82-83.

28. Hugo Moreno cites Paz’s use of the labyrinth as “one of the key metaphors in Hispanic analogical metaphysics.” Although the reference here is to *The Monkey Grammarian*, the idea that Paz’s use of a labyrinth elsewhere suggests a jungle is aptly relevant to *Labyrinth*. See Hugo Moreno, “The Analogical Tradition of Hispanic Thought,” *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 08, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 4.
29. The *pachuco*’s self-denial sharply contrasts with the ideals of self-affirmation posited in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. See Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel Press, 1996).
30. *Labyrinth*, 65.
31. That there is clearly a difference in both attitude and language between the peoples and cultures of Mexico and the United States is suggested by an obvious but often unmentioned reality: Mexicans call the river separating their country from the United States the *Río Bravo*. The same river is called the *Río Grande* by North Americans.
32. *Labyrinth*, 65.
33. *Labyrinth*, 173. In his eulogy to Paz, Leopoldo Zea describes Paz’s investigation of identity with terms related in context to Sartre’s claim of universal human identity. Zea writes, “Al terminar la Segunda Guerra mundial, Jean-Paul Sartre nos dice que el francés no es ya el hombre por excelencia, sino un hombre como todos los hombres.” [Translation: “After the second world war, Jean-Paul Sartre tells us that French is no longer the man par excellence, but a man like all men.”] See Leopoldo Zea, “Octavio Paz: *identidad y modernidad*,” *Cuadernos Americanos* 70 (1998): 18.

Theorizing Multiple Oppressions Through Colonial History: Cultural Alterity and Latin American Feminisms

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Within feminist theory, special attention has often been paid to the discursive space required for women to effectively participate in the interpretive processes of culture without having to perform great feats of linguistic and psychic dexterity. Historically, the call to alter, enlarge, and transform this space has centered on the awareness that performing such tasks, while allowing women to engage in public dialogue and moral deliberation through a determinate location of their voice within preexisting social norms, typically comes at the expense of radical differences and complex intersections of multiple categories of self-identification, including those of race, sex, gender, class, and ethnicity. Under such a bind, North American feminists have developed critical tools of analysis such as “double-edged thinking” to address the problem of mobilizing projects of emancipation against a historical backdrop that is still deeply embedded with masculine narratives, texts, and practices, and which may include the very terms emancipatory projects supply (Butler, 129). In Latin America, given the context of European colonialism, feminist inquiry not only faces this bind (insofar as in order to decolonize, one is burdened with the task of mobilizing projects of liberation against colonial thinking using the very colonial epistemology which originally constrained one), but is *further* stamped by

cultural and historical differences that invariably shape the epistemic location of women’s voices, but which often go unacknowledged in transnational contexts.

The powerful legacies of colonialism and imperial rule, along with the specific conditions of rampant poverty, uneven development under neoliberal globalization, compulsory motherhood, militarization of border regions, rural and linguistic marginalization, social violence, and the stratified division of labor all serve as a backdrop against which the traditional interpretive foci of race, sex, gender, class, and ethnicity prove insufficient as analytical categories in Latin American feminisms. By working through some contemporary examples involving the de-legitimization of indigenous women’s epistemic authority to tell their own narratives, I want to address how in Latin America, philosophical problems—like the problem of language and its capacity to describe experience—emerge in ways that are different from the global North due to the impact of colonialism on Amerindian conceptual frameworks and linguistic systems. Theorizing harms through the interpretive lens of categories like gender is thus not enough to attend to the complexities of women’s concrete experiences of suffering and oppression in the region and to decode the imprint of neocolonial violence on their lives.

In discussing these issues, it is not my intention to erect a false binary between Latin American and Anglophone feminisms, or to suggest that analytical categories like “gender” have not served important roles in framing issues in twentieth-century Latin American and Caribbean feminisms, especially in such a way as to promote transnational dialogue and build advocacy coalitions over shared concerns. Indeed, feminisms vary widely within local and national contexts and are active sites of internal dialogue, negotiation, and contestation. Articulating their full complexity, even within Latin American philosophical feminisms alone, is well beyond the scope of this essay. Rather, what I want to focus on here is the extent to which the *context-dependent* strategies and methodologies that *have* developed in response to women’s situated experiences with oppression—which include feminist theories of “hybridity,” “mental nepantilism,” “transtextuality,” and “world-traveling,” among many others—have been consistently subsumed under (or marginalized within) more mainstream transnational and Anglophone categories of knowledge that developed in response very different socio-historical conditions, and which may not be maximally equipped to deal with issues unique to post-colonial Latin American, borderland identities, or even those of Latinas in the United States (Ruíz-Aho 2010).

Take the category of “gender,” for instance, which has no exact correlate in Spanish. *Género*, as it has come to be translated, is a classificatory noun derived from the Latin *generis* that designates *kind* or *type* (as in “mankind”), and only in grammatical contexts was it used to refer to the masculinity or femininity of a noun (thus internally reproducing heterosexual dualisms). Although the organizing rubric of gender has been important for building transborder links with North American and global feminisms and, in many cases, reworked to fit specific local contexts, historically, its importation into Latin America in the 1990s was met with deep concerns about its depoliticizing effect on women’s struggles. In fact, as Claudia de Lima Costa recounts, “states and inter-governmental agencies unabashedly embraced gender” as a way of promoting “gender equity” in public policies and programs, thus resulting (among other things) in the proliferation of masculinity studies programs at a time when women’s studies programs were severely underfunded or altogether lacking (173). By contrast, in Pinochet’s Argentina, where state-sponsored terrorism against women was institutionalized through military impunity from

rape and the forced disappearance of minor children, mothers of disappeared children organized around the traditional (some would argue, essentialist) concept of maternity and the Catholic deification of motherhood to establish political subjectivities that could attain some level of audibility and protection under state terrorism. But the trajectory of feminist inquiry and activism under conditions of human rights abuses and political repression in Latin America itself requires further contextualization, as the emergence of state-sponsored violence in Latin America can be traced back to the volatile shaping and reshaping of autochthonous political traditions following European colonization of the region.

To be clear, the question here is not whether gender can be a powerful and useful interpretive lens across a broad range of issues in Latin American feminist inquiry—it certainly has been instrumental in orchestrating conceptual strategies against state and religious attempts to reproduce normative family structures that condemn homosexuality through biologically reductive conceptions of sex (174). Moreover, there is a difference between the reception of these categories in Latin America and within Latina feminisms operating within the United States, particularly as they have been appropriated by women-of-color and U.S. third-world feminisms. For example, writing from the experience of the U.S.-Mexico borderland (both geographically and epistemically), Gloria Anzaldúa maintains that “for a people who cannot identify with either standard” of linguistic and cultural norms (i.e., the Anglo or the Spanish), but who are caught in both worlds, what is needed is a critical reworking of these categories to account for the multiplicity of harms and vulnerabilities complex identities face (1987, 77). She writes: “*Necesitamos teorías* that will rewrite history using race, class, gender and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, blur boundaries” (1990, xxv).

Thus, despite these points of complementarity, the larger worry here is that what tends to get lost in the all-too-often unilateral flow of ideas (or transnational commerce of “theories”) is the creative efforts by Latin American feminists to deploy, for instance, strategic and tactical deployments of maternity—even to reify it in parodic ways—so as to address specific harms and context-dependent struggles. In “The Coloniality of Gender,” María Lugones makes an even stronger case for the historical situatedness of our interpretive categories, arguing that the “modern colonial gender system” is itself not native to Mesoamerica and introduced a whole host of power differentials and biases that must be accounted for in order to robustly theorize and enact women’s coalitional agency against “systematic racialized gender violence” (16). Considerations of race—a hallmark of philosophical feminisms in Latin America—are thus equally important, but *also* layered with cultural conceptions of racial mixture and miscegenation rooted in the region’s multifaceted experience with colonialism. It is out of this context that the key interpretive categories of *hybridity* and *mestizaje* arose to address issues of “race,” but which often go unnoticed in North American philosophical discussions of race and ethnicity.

Henceforth, despite substantial cultural and historical differences, the methodological perspectives and regulative concepts used to analyze issues that specifically concern women’s lives in Latin America and border regions have, by and large, been unsuccessful in being marshaled into disciplinary discourses that provide, among other things, institutional support for the mapping and dissemination of ideas, the development of specialized vocabularies, and the organization of professional conferences. This is especially true with regard to *philosophical* feminisms in Latin American (Schutte 2011).

At a time when designating Latin American philosophy as a distinct field of inquiry within academic philosophy is still plagued by serious difficulties, articulating the disciplinary outlines of Latin American *feminist* philosophy may seem to be a doubly daunting task. Indeed, some of the same typologic questions about the term exist: namely, whether what is being designated is feminist inquiry *in* Latin America that is philosophical in nature or engages “traditional” philosophic concerns; whether it is philosophy done *by* Latin American women or those that speak to issues pertinent to Latin American women and the historical vulnerabilities they face; whether it is the deployment of theoretical correctives *to* Latin American philosophy or traditional narratives in the history of philosophy by Latin American women or feminist voices located in Latin America (or whose epistemic position is Latin America but write abroad)—these are all ways of delimiting (in the narrow sense) the robustness and complexity of the field. A better approach is to syncretize, strand by strand, collective concerns and methodological approaches that can be braided together to create a shared vision while respecting internal differences and resisting unilateral interpolation of women’s diverse needs and voices through, for example, *academic* feminisms or professional philosophy. It is for this reason that I interlace (but try not to conflate) discourses drawn from Latina feminisms and Latin American feminist theory into discussions of philosophical feminisms in Latin America as part of a broader, pluralist practice.

In fact, philosophy may not even be a suitable home for Latin American philosophical feminisms. As Ofelia Schutte has argued, “no es fácil para las mujeres incorporar el pensamiento feminista dentro de la filosofía porque la filosofía como discurso académico ha sido elaborada principalmente por hombres y está centrada en un mundo masculino a lo largo de la historia” (Walczak, 6). Even the field of Latin American Thought (*pensamiento latinoamericano*) and the various liberation epistemologies it is home to may not suffice, since they too are prey to universal conceptions of victimhood inattentive to women’s specific experience of social violence and harms (Schutte 2011). For instance, when we look closely at Latin American revolutionary discourses we notice that, in the wake of colonialism, social theorists attempting to develop a critical counter-text that advances social liberation have often slipped into constructions of social reality as homogenous and authentic; this is particularly evident in regulative concept of “the people” in the Catholic-Marxist theology of liberation or in anti-imperialist movements. Under this rubric, women’s bodies and experiences of oppression are excluded from engaging equally in a collective interpretive process within culture that addresses urgent problems of marginalization, servitude, violence, and patriarchy. In fact, twentieth-century Latin American revolutionary discourses often functioned through the implicit subordination of women’s voices to the collective aim of the revolutionary vanguard, and by deferring their material interests to those of “el pueblo.”

Despite this absence of a disciplinary home, very broadly speaking, we can say that philosophical feminisms in Latin America have their roots in forms of analysis that arose in response to the colonial imposition of European conceptual orthodoxies in Latin America and the Caribbean, as colonialism imposed a new system of gender binaries and restrictions that differ significantly from pre-Columbian conceptions of sex and gender. The juridical and social institutions built to manage, regulate, and perpetuate those restrictions resulted in civil codes and municipal regulations that severely restricted women’s access to, for example, education (most notably literacy), divorce, reproductive autonomy or voluntary motherhood. Because philosophical feminisms arose to critically address

these lived concerns, they are fundamentally bound up with forms of feminist inquiry that see women's liberation from oppression through participatory approaches to emancipation (rather than as abstract pursuits).

And yet, although as Amy Oliver notes, "autochthonous feminist thought has existed in Latin America for centuries," dating back to the writings of Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz (1651-1695), philosophical feminisms did not actually begin to emerge in a significant way until socio-political conditions in the mid to late twentieth century precipitated the need to urgently address human rights emergencies (31). They are thus historically responsive to the movements of liberation that swept the subcontinent following the 1959 Cuban revolution, including the quickly developing *movimiento de mujeres* in the 1980s (Alvarez, 541). In fact, it was not until 1979 that the first panel on feminism was held at a national philosophy congress in Latin America, organized by the late Mexican feminist philosopher, Graciela Hierro (1928-2003) (Schutte and Femenías, 401). Even with this precedent over thirty years ago, to date, the journal *Hiparquia* (1988-99) has been the only journal devoted to feminist philosophy in Latin America (*Ibid*). Given this history, part of understanding the many difficulties involved in developing a distinct identity for Latin American philosophical feminisms today has to involve a deeper appreciation for the socio-historical situatedness of philosophical practice in general, and how such contexts tend to be covered-over in transnational (especially North-South) contexts.

As a way of extending this claim to women's epistemic authority in Latin America and the distinct difficulties women can face as speakers, we should note that one of the greatest impacts of European colonization in Latin America has been the closing off of discursive *alternatives* in culture, as well as the inability to give voice to contradictory experiences resulting from the loss of prior cultural contexts. The tendency to see speech acts as graphematic, for example, foreclosed the articulative range and potential of the Andean quippus, the Navajo blanket, as well the narrative mode of performance-based history, as in the Sinaloan *Danza del Venado*. For historically marginalized and subaltern peoples like indigenous women in Latin America, this has had serious ramifications that often go unacknowledged, especially in North-South dialogue. Telling a narrative marked by apparent discontinuities and contradictions (from the standpoint of Western discursive norms and rationality), for instance, can potentially de-legitimize a claimant's voice in advance of the cultural particularities that bear directly on one's ability to speak.

Take the case of Rigoberta Menchú. In 1983 the K'iche' Mayan woman attempted to bring attention to the massacre of over 200,000 Maya Indians at the hands of the Guatemalan Armed Forces by giving a testimonial account (*testimonio*) of her experiences to an ethnologist. David Stoll, an American anthropologist, responded to the subsequent publication of Menchú's oral narrative by questioning the veracity of her claims. Using a model of speech acts based on a correspondence theory of truth, he cast doubt on the legitimacy of her narrative by pointing to apparent contradictions in the names and ages of her deceased family members, including the manner of death. While Stoll claimed his intent was not to challenge the primacy of larger claims to genocide by the K'iche' community, the debate stirred up enough controversy as to usurp the urgency of Menchú's plea for intervention and instead disseminated her narrative within the broader academic discourses of the "culture wars" that were emerging in the 1980s.

If we look to some of the Western conceptual biases inflected into Amerindian cultural traditions through colonialism—as in the assumption that history is a linear

narrative based on logographic recording methods (which privilege literacy)—we find that the speaking positions of modern K'iche' are always interwoven, *pre-predicatively*, with a cultural history marked by relations of power and domination, and which become visible each time the Western observer's claim to finding "textual distortions" in K'iche' narrative texts arises. Against this view of cultural difference and alterity, one argument commonly emerges which points to pre-Hispanic Mayan codices (hieroglyph scripts) as sharing many of the same conventions typically associated with "Western" historiography; while recent scholarship may show these scripts as meant to be sung rather than "read" (a practice which presupposes the interiorization of consciousness), by all accounts they seem to enumerate a coherent, meaningful continuity of politically significant events, including the successive names of rulers, priestly casts, and local rights of administration, etc. In turn, scholars like Stoll have deduced from this Mesoamerican history a more general, cross-cultural standard of rationality assumed to exist *below the level of culture*, and which can be steadfastly applied to the formal study of objects in empirical research, including ethnography.

Yet paradoxically, this argument only reinforces the existence of cultural difference, historical alterity, and cross-cultural misrecognition in the Latin American context. We know, for example, that in Mesoamerican K'iche' society there existed an influential priestly scholarly community known as the *aj tz'ibab* (or *aj tz'ib*, as in "painter" or "scribe"). Because the *aj tz'ibab* sustained Mayan religious practice through the composition and interpretation of calendars, Spanish conquerors quickly moved to eradicate both the religious calendars and their perceived "authors" (Carmack, 17). The violent extermination of the *aj tz'ibab* is significant to the de-legitimization of Menchú's narrative almost 500 years later, since, as George Lovell and Christopher Lutz point out, "once the practice of training 'historians' was curtailed—it was a Kaqchikel [Menchú's tribe] custom also, we should note—the loss must have had a serious impact on how . . . [Maya] oral tradition was passed down through the generations" (171). Thus, the development of certain oral-poetic, mnemonic features in K'iche' narrative practice after the conquest (specifically, in Menchú's testimony) owes much to the fact that, while Spanish conquerors violently forced a functional change in sign-systems onto Amerindian linguistic communities, they *simultaneously excluded* those communities from practices (such as literacy) that would allow them to engage collectively in the interpretive processes of culture. This is especially important with regard to women (and particularly rural, indigenous women) as they have historically lacked access to formal education and suffer the highest rates of illiteracy.

In light of this example, we see how, when a modern K'iche' woman goes to speak or make claims on behalf of her community, relations of power and domination *already shape* her enunciative attempts: her very language and narrative practices are a product of this history of domination. What this example does not address, however, is that problems of social violence in Latin America often involve multiple oppressions marked by complex intersections of racial, sexual, and linguistic vulnerabilities, *but which may not be readily articulable at the level of official culture*. That is to say, in a culturally asymmetrical speaking situation, indigenous women's voices may be put under erasure in ways that cannot be easily accounted for through traditional frameworks of understanding social oppression or the intersections of multiple oppressions. Consequently, solutions and collective practices for social change may emerge which, because they do not speak to or address these complex issues, prove ineffective or, in the long run, reify neo-colonial practices of exclusion, especially

towards indigenous women and other marginalized groups in Latin America. Part of the answer, then, involves increased attentiveness to both the powerful asymmetries that exist between differently situated speakers in culture as well as to how those differences are shaped by history.

In this regard, the complicity between Eurocentric conceptual and linguistic frameworks and neo-colonial practices can be deepened if we look at the problem of meaning formation from a hermeneutic perspective. Within a hermeneutic view of language, meaning is framed in terms of one's tacit familiarity with a shared interpretative framework made up of the discursive acts, practices, and institutions of a particular life-world. This framework makes it possible for us to understand things, and we understand because we grow into a world where the things in question already "make sense." In the original encounter with Mayan culture, for example, the lack of a "shared framework" compelled the colonial observer to misinterpret the Mayan way of making sense of things. The narrative logic of Mayan language, if and in what way it would have been conceived by the Mayans, was not communicable to the first colonial observers because, for one thing, Mayan hieroglyphics lacked a visible metric of translatability (perhaps a linear alphabet) for the Spaniards to see it as a narrative logic in the first place, much less as what Mayans actually purported the codices to say. However, this misrecognition of meaning can have serious modern-day ramifications, especially when culturally privileged agents who have access to the writing instruments of official history (as Michel de Certeau would put it) enact it.

To explain this issue, the cultural anthropologist Quetzil Castañeda has cited the cartographic naming of the Yucatán peninsular region as a prime example of cross-cultural misrecognition, but one with deep significance for the configuration of postcolonial power relations in Latin America. He writes that "the discourse on the naming of the Yucatán has become a topos not only of Yucatán but of Latin American colonial discourse criticism, since it economically marks the *complex textual inversion of alterity forged in the encounter between European and Indian*" (23, emphasis added). The story of the naming of the Yucatan, he contends, constituted an arbitrary (because it was not seen by the Spaniards as arbitrary, but as universal truth) imposition of the Spaniards' interpretative horizon on Amerindian landscapes. He reproduces Tzvetan Todorov's congruent claim that "when the Spaniards discovered this land, their leader asked the Indians how it was called; as they did not understand him, they said uuyik a t'aan, which means, 'what do you say' or 'what do you speak', that 'we do not understand you'. And then the Spaniard ordered it set down that it be called Yucatan..." (27). Told in a slight variation, Castañeda writes:

When the Spaniards landed—landed on this "tierra del faisán y venado" this "land of pheasant and deer"—the Indians called it "u luum cutz, u luum ceh"; and, when they met the natives who approached, they asked, "what is the name of this land?" Not understanding k'astrant'aan (i.e., Spanish), one Mayan turned to the other and exclaimed, "Uuy ku t'aan!" [Listen how they talk!]. (28)

As a major outcome of this forceful misappropriation of Mayan linguistic expressions, modern Mayans have had to *re-make intelligible their own world back from colonial (mis) translations*. Moreover, the Herculean task of unconcealing the resources of expression covered over by colonialism is particularly difficult for Mayans because current expressions—such as the widespread popular use of Yucatán to designate an ancestral Mayan dwelling place rather than the original

"we do not understand you"—have been normativized by official representations of colonial history as foundational facts: namings vested by the Spaniards' powerful claims of authority to be subsequently certified into timeless, encyclopedic form. The problem, of course, is that discursive frameworks always carry with them an unacknowledged background of assumptions that become settled and calcified in culture, especially through normative social practices and language.

Historical insights such as these have led the Chilean feminist and cultural critic Nelly Richard to contend that "the Latin American context is characterized by the fact that the mechanisms of oppression and repression are always *multiple* (colonialist, neoimperialist, militaristic, and patriarchal, multicapitalist, etc.)," but multiple, one should add, in a way that fundamentally differs from the structures of oppression and subordination generally theorized by Anglophone and North American feminisms (286). The added consideration here is not only the history of European colonialism, but colonialism's impact on the subsequent formation of the structures of oppression that affect women's lives, including the material contexts of poverty and widespread discrimination. This extends to theorizing the *intersectionality* of oppressions based on categories like gender, as the continuation of neocolonial and neoimperial conditions necessitate further considerations of how the historicity of oppression *bears on those intersections*, particularly in such a way as to render them *subaudible* under certain categories of knowledge.

It must be said, of course, that the lacunae and gaps-in-knowledge opened up by the importation of analytical categories such as gender into the Latin American context is not on account of the categories themselves, as it would be misleading to portray them as monolithic discursive domains rather than dynamic sites of negotiation and contestation, even within the feminisms they emerged from. More at stake here is how the multiplicitous nature of the historical structures of oppression that undergird the formation of interpretive categories in Latin America have a tendency to become under-theorized when the circulation of terms emanating from the north are privileged in transnational discourses. That said, one problem that can come out of critiquing such discourses and the interpretive categories privileged therein is the development of an account of Latin American women as suffering from a form of historical victimhood. As I see it, deeply diachronic approaches to social and political problems that affect women in Latin America (such as conditions of marginalization in communication) should not be seen as deflationary with regard to political praxis, or as privileging theoretical models of feminist inquiry over activist ones. What, one might ask, is the aim of pouring over conquest-era ethnographic records and administrative manuals, if the guiding concerns of our philosophic practice center around the lived-experience and afflictions of modern-day women and marginalized, peripheral voices? The diversity of methodological perspectives of Latin American feminisms, taken together in an inclusive sense, not only address women's *lived* concerns but help raise important questions about the adequacy of, for example, dominant Western conceptions of language and selfhood to do justice to the narrative life of multicultural and subaltern subjects—subjects who often dwell in an understanding of things marked, not by continuity, but by discontinuity, rupture, and alterity. Beyond this, analyses such as the one I am offering should instill a deeper sense of the complicated factors involved in North-South dialogue, including an awareness of the difficult epistemic and interpretive labors marginalized subjects must often perform without any reciprocal acknowledgment of those efforts.

In arguing for an epistemically inclusive, pluralist theoretical model for Latin American philosophical feminisms, I have been following Ofelia Schutte's call to articulate a vision of "Latin American feminist philosophy [that] can achieve its own distinct identity and stop being dependent for its articulation on paradigms of knowledge whose premises are not necessarily best attuned to understand the issues arising from its cultural location and contextual differences" (2011, 801). One important step towards this goal, I have argued, is to develop a more robust account of the *historicality of oppression* that often gets lost, or is subaudible within Anglophone and North American feminist discourses (and which I recognize, are themselves plural and complex). To this end, I have worked through issues of epistemic de-legitimation raised by the North American reception of Rigoberta Menchú's testimonial narrative as a way of re-investing notions of cultural alterity as central to theorizing the historically complex multiplicity of oppressions that characterize Latin American feminisms. To avoid problems of fears over political paralysis, especially at a time when violence against women and human rights emergencies remain widespread, I have situated the history of European colonization within wider concerns about the marginalization of women's voices in cross-cultural dialogue. On this account, one can agree that, at a minimal level, addressing questions of oppression and marginalization often involves engaging in dialogue across North-South contexts. The problem is that such dialogue invariably involves negotiations nested within particular kinds of Western argumentative frameworks that, historically, have tended to disempower indigenous, non-Western speakers in general and women in particular. Thus, at the practical level, there are important historical issues that bear negatively on the ability of women and marginalized, indigenous communities to express their interests and/or advocate on their own behalf. In this respect, the historical roots of oppression cannot be disassociated from the inquiry of a critical Latin American feminist philosophy, since it is always present, even in the gaps between words.

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Building A Xicana Indígena Philosophical Base

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In the 1960s-70s, "Chicano" (maintaining its male dominated spelling and praxis) generally represented those Mexicans born within the borders of the United States, but was not limited to "Mexicans" or to those only born within the U.S. Many other marginalized groups, such as those from Central America, also identified with the ideology of "Chicanismo," but not all people embraced the term. Some view(ed) this term as negative, mainly because it promoted an idea of rebelliousness, politicization, and Indigenismo. Some thought it to be nationalistic, limited, and not representative or inclusive of larger struggles. Others viewed "Chicano" as a dirty word. Shame and denial of being Indigenous resurfaced through this word.

The 1960s-70s was a time of social upheaval and Chicanos were just one strand in the many movements for political, social, and economic change. What was labeled as the Chicano Movement was the first time that Chicanas and Chicanos decided to reject imposed labels and name themselves. The concept of self-naming and identity is an important concept in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa: "She has this fear that she has no names, that she has many names, that she doesn't know her names" (1987, 43). Anzaldúa, in her concern with "names," alludes to the idea that, as Indigenous people, our many names were erased. When the European invasions occurred, identities, the names that were self-ascribed, and the languages spoken, were suppressed and stifled. Capitalism and the world economy have lasted over 500 years "built, in part, on the suppression of indigenous knowledge and spirituality" (Hernández 2005, 125). Before the beginning of colonization, Indigenous people had their own identities and knew exactly who they were and what they called themselves. Yet, the names were changed, erased, or replaced with Spanish names, Catholic names, and pejorative names. As such, "language is the perfect instrument of empire" (Grounds, Tinker, Wilson 2003, 103); colonizer languages and terminology have often erased and silenced Xicanas/os and have taught shame in how they speak and what they call themselves. In order to fully understand Xicana/o identity and history, we must fully understand Xicana/o coloniality. Only then can Xicanas/os assert their epistemic potential toward the "vision of liberation and decolonization" (Hernández 2005, 125).

Frantz Fanon (1952; 1963; 2002) discusses the idea that, in order to exist and be recognized, the self needs to be recognized by the other; there needs to be a mutual recognition of one another. Each self needs to recognize and accept the other as they are, including the dimensions from which they view themselves. Yet, in the colonial system/matrix, the dominant power does not recognize subordinates, and, in fact, invisibilizes them and denies them any power. Therefore, Fanon believes that it is even more so crucial to claim and assert "Blackness." The colonizer must see the others as they are and accept them.

In the same manner, it has been crucial for Xicanas/os to claim and assert their indigeneity. Anzaldúa (2000) also presents this notion that we must reclaim and assert the parts of ourselves that have been oppressed, because, if we do not, we risk the crushing and invisibilizing of those parts of our identity and core. In *Racism*, Albert Memmi (2000) also asserts that we must recognize the colonial experience of race as a lived reality, even if it is only a social construction. The works by Fanon, Anzaldúa, and Memmi are very relevant in Native and Chicana discourse and articulate the colonial matrix within which we still exist. The work in Subaltern Studies by Gaytri Spivak (1990) and what is labeled “Colonial Discourse” are also relevant points of discussion and serve as building blocks of thought in Native American and Chicana/o Studies. At the same time, Subaltern Studies and Colonial Discourse can be problematic, as they do not substantively encompass Native worldviews, cosmology, ontology, and understandings. In fact, some Native scholars are working to challenge these theoretical perspectives by creating their own philosophical/theoretical frameworks. For example, Jack Forbes’ (2004) theoretical frame of the Wétiko Disease is a platform from which to view the colonizers and their actions. This disease, drawn from a Native American and Canadian First Nations concept, is the illness of power and destruction. Using examples of Native genocide, ethnocide, and ecocide, he articulates very similar ideas to those of Fanon and Memmi, including showing the colonizer as dehumanized. However, he does so through a distinct Indigenous perspective.

According to Yolanda Broyles-González (1994), in her essay, “Theater of the Sphere: Toward the Formulation of a Native Performance Theory and Practice,” criticisms of Xicanas/os embracing Indigenous epistemology have reduced it to being mere romantic idealizations of indigeneity. Marxist-leaning, social activists of the 1960s-70s believed that Xicanas/os were using Indigenous spirituality as a way to derail the community from direct political social messages and action. In contrast, Broyles-González argues, “I would venture to say, however, that the presence of *indígena* knowledge or ‘mythology’ was far more than a matter of ‘content.’ The Teatro Campesino did not regard the cultural and mythical in any way separate or outside of the social and historical context of Chicanas/os” (1994, 120). Integrating Indigenous knowledge was not an escape from the political realities, but rather a refinement to distinguish Chicana/o *Indígena* political realities which began from a colonial history. For Indigenous people of the Americas, colonialism ultimately spawned capitalism, which began a social struggle for economic and political justice (Weatherford 1988; Churchill 2003). Incorporating *Indigenismo*, as was done in the Teatro Chicano movement, was a tool for empowerment with the goal for liberation. The same can be said for “Zapatismo” where maintaining *Indígena* politics and identity is fundamental to the movement goals. *Indigenismo* was viewed as having emancipatory potential. Broyles-González (1994) credits the early Chicana/o “teatristas”¹ as the early “Indigenistas,” as many of them were also incorporating Danza Mexica and its philosophical teachings into their repertoire. Broyles-González posits that many of them were responsible for creating contemporary, more critical understandings of Xicana/o Indigeneity. Still, critics believed that their lofty desires for an Indigenous spirituality disrupted their attention from the essential issues and problems—colonization and the need to unsettle the on-going patterns of such colonization. In contrast, Broyles-González argues that in fact *Indigenismo* was intimately linked to decolonization:

The Teatro’s militant affirmation of the *indígena* ancestral heritage can be appreciated only in the context of the Chicano movement’s insistence on

decolonization, and the movement’s affirmation of Chicana/o cultural and historical distinctiveness. The intense reclamation of Mayan and Aztec knowledge was a direct response to the historical Euro-American institutional denigration of the Chicana/o people and the ever-present threat of cultural assimilation, at the same time it affirmed a Chicana/o axis. (1994, 124)

This “axis” meant Chicanas/os were operating from their own autonomous and self-determined identity upon which they based a performance aesthetic. Performance of the self and Chicana/o history originated from Chicana/o constructions of self, rather than constant opposition to “the other” or “hegemonic and dominant white social, cultural, and political practices” (Broyles-González 1994, 82). The Chicana/o axis was constructed through Aztec and Mayan knowledge systems: “The recourse to Mayan and Aztec knowledge was also in part dictated by historical convenience: these are among the best documented of American tribal cultures” (Broyles-González 1994, 85). Therefore, the many Indigenous ancestries of teatro members would become “merged into a common process of recovery based on Mayan and Aztec knowledge” (Broyles-González 1994, 85).

During the 1960s-70s, questions of representation and power, or lack thereof, were central to anti-racist and social movements. These movements allowed a community to re-examine the past in order to create and live a better future. Part of that critical examination has led to expanded and new dimensions of identity. An offshoot of the Chicano Movement produced a renewed spelling of the term Chicano, using an “X”—Xicano—instead of a “Ch” (Rodríguez 1996; Maiz 1995). The “X” challenged Spanish constructions of language and pronunciation. It represented a return to the Nahuatl usage and pronunciation of the “X” and thus was an act of Indigenous reclamation. Chicanas in the 1960s-80s challenged the male-centric/patriarchal nature of the movement and also began to assert “mujerista” or womanist perspectives. Rejecting the dominantly white, Feminist Movement that often marginalized and disenfranchised women of color, they began to configure their own concepts and ideas as related to feminism (Castillo 1994). The term Xicana, like Xicano, would be attached to a politic, an Indigenous identity and spirituality, and would assert and affirm the central role of women in the movement.

Ana Castillo (1994) popularized the term *Xicanisma* to define a unique Xicana feminism which was shaped by Indigenous ideology and spirituality. Xicana, Xicanindia, Xicanista, Xicana *Indígena* would all be radical reconfigurations of the same ideology: a self-identified Xicana that embraces her Indigenous/Native identity, “re”-placing women as the center of life. More radical adaptations looked toward Indigenous languages, namely, Nahuatl (as the term itself derives from Nahuatl)² to acknowledge that the language is not male-dominated, as is the Spanish language. For example, identifying the Chicano Movement as solely “Chicano,” which in the Spanish/European language is correct (Chicano in its male-dominated form is meant to include and encompass women), marginalizes and invisibilizes women and their role, presence, and existence. Chicanas challenged their Xicano brothers by proposing that decolonization needed to occur on multiple levels, even in our phallogocentric language and through the conscious and intentional inclusion of Chicanas. Similar to the need to assert Indigeneity as a measure to protect that part of ourselves from being discarded or crushed, Chicanas also wanted to assert their *mujerismo*/womanism within the community, so as not to be invisibilized.

Many began to make conscious efforts to be inclusive through using both Chicana and Chicano or Xicana and Xicano.

For example, the National Association for Chicano Studies changed its name in 1995: “The association’s most recent organizational name change took place in 1995 during the NACS annual conference held in Spokane, Washington. The membership voted to rename the association the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, in recognition of the critical contribution and role of Chicanas in the association” (website). During this meeting, I was present for the heated debate. One participant in a student caucus called for the complete erasure of the “o” and the “a” and proposed a new term—“Chican.” This suggestion did not go over well, as many made jokes that the word looked too similar to “Chicken.” For abbreviation and space purposes, many began to write Chicana/o or Xicana/o. The critique of this was the discomfort of the “slash,” which for some represented a division or a visual “border” within a text. In response to this resentment of the divisive line, many have begun to write Chican@ or Xican@. This “@” symbol was to collapse the contentious “a” and “o” into one, indistinguishable symbol that did not dominate one over the other. Some might argue that the “a,” representing the feminine is in the center, while others may view it as the “o,” surrounding the feminine.

Overall, each of these reconfigurations was still operating from a European construction of language. Some questioned if adding the “a” in “Xicana” would necessarily change or augment people’s ways of thinking. Some saw it as mere tokenism, a feeble attempt to be inclusive only on paper, but not in lived realities. While in attendance at a U.C. Berkeley Chicano Studies Departmental meeting (1996), as the undergraduate student representative, I observed a lively debate amongst the professors that were considering a name change for the department to Latino Studies. It was proposed that if it was going to be changed, it had to be Chicana/o/Latina/o Studies or Chicana Chicano/Latina Latino Studies. While most agreed that it was a mouthful, the debate continued as some argued that it should remain as is: Chicano. One professor argued that we had to move with the times and a progressive option would be to change the name altogether to Latino Studies only. In response, one professor (Dr. Larry Trujillo) argued that if we really wanted to be “progressive or radical” then what we should do is call it Chicana Studies and let that stand on its own. In response to the instability and variation of “a/o” or “@,” etc., I also believe that a radical re-conception of our collective identity should be to call ourselves Xicana.

I am also challenged with which terms/spellings I use in my writing and the implications. The use of the “@” in Xican@, especially in our current technological age, feels as if it is appropriating a symbol commonly associated with email and cyberspace. For me, Xican@, while well-intentioned, feels as if it endorses notions of modernity, a sort of neo-Xican@, techie generation. I am also uncomfortable with the “a/o” both because of the acceptance of and compliance with European male dominance in language and because of the dividing slash that solidifies a separation rather than an equal acknowledgement or reciprocal relationship between men and women. At the same time, I respect Native understandings of duality. In Nahuatl, for example, “Cihuatl and Tlacatl” are the words for “woman and man,” but when one refers to their “people” or nation in their language, the correct way is Mexica or Purepecha (not Mexico or Purepecho); there is no masculine or feminine distinction to the collective word for the People. One might say, Tlacatl Mexica (Mexica man), but both men and women are Mexica. With this same argument, it could be said “Xicana man or Xicana woman,” but we are all Xicana. While I personally know “feminist men” that have adopted and call themselves Xicana, overall there are very few men that would call themselves Xicana, because if said through the Spanish

language and ideology, it infers that they are “women.” Clearly, language and ideology complicate the use of terminology, which is only further complicated when one inserts a critical gender analysis, challenging the assumed hetero-normativity and the limiting nature of dual sex and gender constructions.

In his self-published book, *The X in La Raza*, Roberto Rodríguez lays out the linguistic, social history of terms, including the “X” in Xicano and the problems with finding “one” term that can incorporate our identity with all of its complexities. According to Rodríguez: “That still leaves us with the problem of speaking of all the groups, without using a few dozen names—without being inaccurate—every time we want to refer to all Raza in one sentence” (1994, 51). Admittedly, my Xicana feminist ideology advocates for Xicana as a symbol for the vindication of the feminine held sacred in the matriarchal and matrilineal societies of Indigenous communities. Within Danza Mexica circles, women (and in some few spaces, two-spirit/gay men) hold the position of caring for the fire or smoke in the center of the circle. It is an honored position that connects women with the sun and earth, as central forces and givers of life. It also honors the dual-duality that exists in everything. This dual-duality is the understanding that not only does duality exist with two opposing entities (Mother Earth and Father Sky, sun and moon, water and fire), but also within a single entity. For example, within one human body there is duality (masculine and feminine energy). The same can be said for the Earth, Sky, and every element and/or entity that exists. Since the understanding of Xicana, as an all-encompassing term with a radical leaning toward Xicanisma/Xicana feminism (acknowledging that all human beings came from a woman) or a return to a matriarchal/matrilineal foundation, is not widely accepted, it is still necessary to use both Xicana and Xicano.

For brevity and to eliminate confusion, I often concede to use the term “Xicana/o” to clarify that I am discussing an entire community, which includes both women and men. I recognize the historical and contemporary need to still assert Xicana (still living in a sexist, heterosexist, and misogynistic society), with the hope that, at some point, Xicanas and Xicanos will arrive to a collective consciousness and consensus to reconceive the way we label, view, and represent ourselves and our community and exercise or live this reality. Rather than fear the feminine, it is my hope and foresight that it will be embraced, not only on paper, but in the lived ways we honor, treat, and respect women, women power, and feminine energy. It is my hope that the collective community will come to view itself through the lens and ideology of “Xicana”; a more complete view that carries memory and a call for action.

Xicanas and Xicanos adopted the “X” as not only a re-spelling of the word, but as a conscious resistance to further Hispanicization/colonization. According to Rocky Rodríguez, the reason Xicano was spelled Chicano in the 1960s-70s was because “we were thinking in Spanish or English back then” (in Rodríguez 1996, 34). The “X” is also symbolic of a shift within the movement. The 1960s Chicano Movement focused on politics, whereas later evolutions of the movement began to recognize the need for spiritual guidance. The X phenomena stems from the resurgence of “Indigenismo” or revival/reconnection to Indigenous roots, ceremony, and way of life:

Many of these brothers got caught up in the same form of imperialism that they were supposed to be trying to destroy. No amount of ballet Folklóricos, mariachis, and Chicano hand-claps could make them realize that their plans did not take us to the source and focus of our true Mexican culture.

Marxism versus capitalism, so-called leaders and their partisans against others, drugs, and alcohol and a lack of honesty doomed the nationalist to sitting around the tequila bottle remembering the good old days.

Any political movement that tries to exist without spiritual strength and purpose is doomed to fail. Rhetoric, weapons and money can only carry it for so long. The faith and hope of a people are the strongest tools for change. (Aguilar 1980, 43)

As such, the “X” in the spelling is symbolic toward the recognition of a much more profound political and spiritual grounding that moves beyond definitions that once held true in the 1960s Chicano Movement. According to Activist Tupac Enrique:

In Aztlan, a new generation—el Xicano—has revived the consciousness of our ancient indigenous identity. This consciencia is not a romantic idealization, but a process born of the relationship with the surviving indigenous nations that form the family of Uto-Aztecan languages. (Enrique 1991, 2)

The “X” symbolically recognizes and connects to Indigenous relatives that share the same language family. The use of the “X” began to re-think and re-focus the meanings of identity which had stemmed from a nationalist, geo-political, boundary-encapsulated term (which is inherently Eurocentric), and instead opted for a “non-border,” philosophical, spiritual term. Xicana does not identify a mere geographical location, nor is it limited to the imposed political, mental, and psychological borders. It reflects a political belief and strategy, an ideology and way of life. It is “mujer/woman”-centered and honors, accepts, and respects all people who identify with being Indigenous to this continent and Earth.

Having reflected upon the sexist, colonized, and homophobic behaviors that the Chicano Movement often possessed in the 1960s, the move towards a “Xicana” approach in contemporary movements is more than symbolic. According to Ana Castillo, “It is our task as Xicanistas, to not only reclaim our indigenismo, but also to reinsert the forsaken feminine into our consciousness” (1994, 12). Coming to a Xicana consciousness is a process of self-naming and understanding. According to “A Call to the Autonomous Pueblos of Aztlan”:

Before any decisions are made for working towards liberation of the people we must be clear about who we are as a people and how we must maintain and defend our spiritual and cultural identity. Foremost is that our traditional spirituality and culture is the foundation for the autonomy of the Xicano Mexicano pueblo. The other is that a consensus for autonomy among Xicano Mexicanos is vital in order to strengthen the Xicano Movement in the coming decades. (Tonatierra, “A Call...”)

I interpret this “call” to all the Xicano Mexicano Pueblos as a plea for nation-building and a consensus of Indigenous identity.

The X is symbolic of the X in Mexica and is pronounced as the “Ch” in Chicano. Some might even refer to themselves as part of the X generation, meaning that they are in process of asserting and reclaiming their Indigenous identity (Rodríguez 1996). According to Mexican Modern Artist, Francisco Icaza:

Hay una X que es la X de México; la X es uno de los símbolos mas antiguos y además es el cruce de dos caminos, como México que son culturas muy fuertes que se cruzan./There is an X that is the X of México;

the X is one of the oldest symbols and furthermore is the cross of two roads, like México that is made of strong cultures that cross each other.³

The X in the Chicano Movement also harkens to Malcolm X’s use of the “X” to resist further enslavement (Moraga 2011). In the Chicano context, the “X” was adopted as a symbol of Indigenous liberation. According to Rodríguez:

[The] X could have the same value to Raza as it does to African Americans—representing the Indigenous names, the language, and the history that was taken from us. However, in addition, X to La Raza also represents recovered knowledge, wisdom, compassion and a fighting spirit. (1996, 133)

Xicanas/os were in a process, not of “re-learning”—but re-membering; they were recalling memories and re-connecting and building back their communities. In order to “re-member,” one had to start by going home; going back to Indigenous languages, asking families for their stories, and going back to places of family origin. As Rodríguez further states, “X is the spirit that has allowed us to persevere and seek justice. It is also the spirit that rejects oppression, conquest, exploitation and domination. X is hope and the fire that can never be extinguished and the spirit that refuses to die” (1996, 135). Essentially, the X in Xicana/o represents a spirit. Whether or not one calls themselves Xicana, it still identifies the way in which one lives and walks. It is a spirit that ultimately cannot be quantified or reduced to language or words.

As with genetics, color of skin has little to do with the manner in which one is raised. In the U.S., the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) recognizes only those that can prove blood quantum through documentation. A person filing for recognition does not need to prove their Native language, spirituality, or traditions. In contrast, in México, one does not need to prove their blood quantum, documentation, nor even appear racially as Indigenous, but if a person knows their language, traditions, and dress, they are recognized as Indigenous. By the same token, there are many Indigenous people in the U.S. (including many California Natives, such as the Winnemem Wintu), who are traditional peoples that know their language and ways, yet are not recognized politically by the U.S. government. Ethnically, they can be recognized as Native, but politically and by the BIA they are not formally recognized Native people. This status is relational to that of Xicanas/os. Ethnically, Xicanas/os may identify as Indigenous, but politically, they are not recognized as such. This may seem arbitrary, but political recognition and representation is an important piece of the Indigenous struggle internationally, as exemplified by the 2011 Collective Statement presented by the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas at the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples:

Noting that all peoples should have the human right to be free from discrimination, unrecognized and unrepresented peoples currently do not have equal rights and protections to land, water, culture, identity, and child welfare protection as recognized indigenous peoples.

Noting that unrepresented and unrecognized tribes have less than equal rights to fair judicial review, unrecognized and unrepresented peoples are more vulnerable to discrimination, especially in exercising their right to land use, practice and preservation of culture, and in turn contributes to the cultural genocide of these peoples.

Acknowledging the importance of the right to equal and fair judicial review, unrecognized and unrepresented peoples cannot engage the state in legal address to their specific needs specifically related to land, natural resources, cultural custodianship, and their economic sustainability. Further noting that unrepresented and unrecognized Indigenous women experience greater levels of discrimination due to the compound effect of ethnicity, gender, class, language, and, in particular, non-represented and unrecognized status. (2011)

Political recognition and representation opens the door to claim land, civil, and religious/spiritual rights, all of which pose a threat to the status quo. Blood quantum is a double-edged sword. While blood quantum ensures that direct Indigenous descendants are being recognized and afforded due rights, it can also pit people against each other who become obsessed with percentage, rather than culture. As federal and state recognized Indigenous people compete for political and economic benefits, some will deny, negate, and/or delegitimize individual or other tribal claims to recognition, so as not to share the resources. Nevertheless, Xicana Indígenas have more recently become recognized on a larger scale through the participation of Xicanas at International forums such as the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous People in New York City. At the 2004 Intercontinental Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas in Lima, Peru, several Xicanas participated in the meeting and were formally recognized by the chair/organizer, Tarcila Rivera. Rivera announced at the introductory ceremonies, as she presented each country's delegation, that the Xicanas were present as a unique entity within the U.S. delegation and "represented a new reality that we all must accept."⁴ In effect, Rivera was acknowledging that Xicanas represent a reality that is occurring globally—the migration of people from various parts of the continent into the U.S. who then have children, do not return to their home territories, and must deal with the conflict of identity, assimilation experiences of racism and denial of culture within a particular "American" context. What Xicanas have been dealing with for over 150 years (since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) is the model for what other Indigenous migrants are only more recently coming to experience and understand. Xicanas serve as a positive blueprint for others to demonstrate how we can navigate our experiences and keep our identity/culture/spirituality intact despite U.S. empirical forces.

While it cannot be denied that Xicanas/os possess a particular historical context with a "Mexican" identified population (thus the term MeXicana), the process/goal of reunification of all Indigenous peoples throughout this hemisphere has led to the ideological transformation of the word Xicana. Roberto Hernández (2005) discusses a new epistemic trend emerging within Chicana/o Studies which is Indigenous (evidenced in the 2004 creation of an Indigenous caucus within NACCS). The use or promotion of Xicana Indígena is meant to expand notions and meanings, rather than limit them. Xicanas are the descendants of Indigenous people that were forced to migrate out of their homelands due to economic and/or social repression. Those descendants born and/or raised in the United States experience a particular context, experience, and lived reality that is common and shared, not just by Mexicans, but by all those that come from other repressed locations throughout the continent, be it Central or South America. Xicana Indígena refers to diaspora—the experience of displacement and economic disparity. "Xicana" describes our urban/historical experience and has functioned as a doorway to multiple understandings and epistemologies. Xicanas have opened this door in new and multiple ways. The

term Xicana is important because it continues to honor the past by maintaining a connection to the historical trajectory of "Chicano," and all that the word carries. Through Xicana, that history is maintained, while opening new doorways of possibility. It affirms that our language, our words, and the terms we value *are* important and matter.

The loss, uncertainty, or suppression of identity, once arriving or being raised in the U.S. have caused Xicanas/os to form a new nation built upon an experience of displacement and search for self. The "not-knowing" of direct ancestral lineage has created the need for Xicanas to search for connections and roots to a community and identity. Often times, Xicana identity reflects an "inter-tribal" or Pan-Indigenous experience. Similar to the term Native American, Xicana is a more generalized term that is interchangeable with the direct Indigenous nation, if known (for example: I am Xicana, but I am also Caxcan). For those that do not know direct bloodline, Xicana is a term to maintain the connection to an Indigenous nation and identity. Roberto Rodríguez (1996) describes Xicana as a revolutionary "spirit" and whether or not one self-identifies with the term Xicana, it is how they live their lives that can reflect this same spirit. The same can be said for similar terms that historically were acts of reclamation, resistance, self-determination, and self-naming such as Boricua, Pilipino, or Diné (rather than Navajo).

At the same time, the term Xicana can relate to Stuart Hall's definition of the "floating signifier" (1997). Xicana does not have a "settled" definition and the definitions we have at this moment in time are really systems of meaning that are historically articulated by historical circumstances. These systems of meanings will change because history evolves, but people make history and, as such, how "Xicana" is expressed may change. The ways Xicanas carry this identity through their dress, language, and ways of being can be read on the body as a text and can signify an idea. The open notions of the meaning of Xicana will continue to take shape as it goes through the complicated process of interaction with others. Xicana exists through representation and the ways in which people interpret and present its meaning. As Frantz Fanon (2000) discusses the ways in which the self emerges and how people become conscious of him/herself, he argues that the self only emerges in a relationship to the other. In order for the self to be recognized, the other cannot tell the one who he/she is; the other needs to accept one for who they are. This recognition process does not happen in a colonial situation because the colonizer tells the colonized who he/she is; therefore, the colonized self becomes invisible and the colonized does not have the power to contest. Xicana sensibilities and notions of self became invisibilized by mainstream society that dictated the acceptable labels and identities.

For Xicanas, the colonizer has determined the names and identities of the community with the words "Hispanic" and "Latino." These terms completely delete Indigenous identity from existing: "'Hispanic is not a race,' said Mr. Quiroz, whose ancestors were the Quechua people, of the Central Andes. 'Hispanic is not a culture. Hispanic is an invention by some people who wanted to erase the identity of indigenous communities in America'" (Decker 2011, 3). These terms, which focus on Spanish colonial and linguistic heritages, pose a virtual war against an Indigenous presence. Therefore, these imposed, yet accepted, mainstream labels are being challenged. With Fanon, he believes that one must assert his/her "Blackness"; the part that has been denied. This belief is similar to the one underlying the assertion of Xicana Indígena. Xicanas have been denied identity and an Indigenous past; therefore, Xicanas have begun to assert their "Indigeness" in order to demand recognition, and in the process, reclaim self.

It was inevitable that Xicana Indígena identity should identify and become part of the political, economic, and spiritual struggle of the Xicana/o nation of people, but just as Chicanas/os were fighting for justice here in this country in the 1960s, they began to imitate their oppressors and accept values of individualism and materialism (Acuña 1981; Forbes 1973). Part of the colonization is the belief that there is no time “to think or be spiritual,” because instead [we] are going through immediate, personal needs/political struggles. In contrast, political activists believed that the downfall of the Chicano Movement was due to a lack of critical thinking/analysis and a lack of strong spiritual foundation that would function simultaneously and in sync with political work (Muñoz 1989; Moraga 1993; 2011). Thus, a movement of Xicanas/os began to take up Indigenous traditions in the hopes of both solidifying their identity, and bringing them the spiritual faith and hope needed for change. As Cherrie Moraga proclaimed, “The road to our future is the road from our past” (1993, 171).

The 1992 quincentennial, or 500-year anniversary of the European invasion and genocide of Indigenous people, marked a very important moment historically. In addition to eliciting awareness to the worst genocide/holocaust in the history of the world (1492), prophecies and oral histories were also coming to revelation and the necessity for women to be on the forefront of political, social, and spiritual action was critical. A contemporary Indigenous, woman-centered philosophical base located in a commitment to resistance was taking formation. Throughout the continent, Indigenous leaders of various communities were gathering to strategize, mobilize, and create plans in which to organize the reunification of the continent and focus on the decolonization, resistance, and restoration of Indigenous communities. Indigenous women took a vocal and active role in this organizing. Self-determined Xicanas living in the U.S. context took responsibility for their role in this process through full and active participation. Xicanas began to think, write, and organize within the community toward sovereign nation-building and in collaboration with other Indigenous nations within the U.S. and intercontinentally.

Aztlan and Xicanisma were ideas being claimed, demonstrating that we have the right to determine our destiny and our spiritual lives as a people and to seek restorative justice, respect, and righteousness as Indigenous peoples. In his article “The Indian and the Researcher,” Brayboy (2000) discusses strategic ways that identities and even behaviors are appropriated in order to gain political, social power and promote an agenda of empowerment. Through the promotion of certain symbols, clothing, and ideas, Xicanas were appropriating markers of indigeneity. Holland (1998) discusses “semiotic mediation” as the idea when cultural symbols are used to make, create, and teach meaning. Perhaps the notions of Aztlan and Xicanisma were used in the same way: to create meaning and symbols of Indigenous identity in order to combat racist propaganda of not belonging. According to Laura Gutiérrez’s essay, “Deconstructing the Mythical Homeland: México in Contemporary Performance”:

In the process of reclaiming a social and political space within the United States, Chicana/os had to imagine (or create) a mythical homeland (Aztlan or the present-day United States Southwest) in order to explain their indigenous roots, their nomadism, and therefore their “lack” of territorial space. Part of their territorial reclamation project points to an important gesture that needs to be highlighted here: Chicanas/os cannot be defined necessarily as a diasporic community given that conquest and annexation are part of a shared historical heritage. This is complicated by the fact

that for Chicanas/os, Mexican cultural heritage has been critical in the construction of a cultural identity, regardless of their date of “arrival” into the United States. Thus, in the Chicana/o imaginary, both Aztlan and México (the nation-state) signify the place of origin. (Gaspar de Alba 2003, 65)

In this essay, Gutiérrez argues that it can be viewed as problematic for Xicanas to consider themselves “in diaspora” because, unlike other Latinos, such as Puerto Ricans, Xicanas do not necessarily have a place that they come from. Further, if Xicanas are claiming that they have always been “here,” in the U.S. Southwest (as was claimed through 1970s Chicano nationalism), and if we are claiming a history of migration, then Gutiérrez questions, how can we be “in diaspora”?

Chicana feminists, beginning in the sixties and seventies, had to negotiate between these two positions in relation to nationalism. On the one hand, the reclamation of a symbolic geographical space validates the existence of Chicanas/os within the United States by claiming the Southwest as the place of origin. But at the same time, Aztlan is imagined in masculinist fashion, thus excluding women and their so-called female preoccupations as valid subjects and practices. However, México is not an alternative for Chicana feminists as it is also constructed by the masculine imagination; for Chicanas, traveling (both literally and symbolically) to this homeland involves a process of deconstruction as opposed to affirmation of one’s true identity. (Gaspar de Alba 2003, 65)

Gutiérrez presents an interesting point and a fissure within the current definition that many Xicana Indígenas are using, but however brings us back to the place of “limbo,” positioning Xicanas/os as “landless” and without an identity. While her points are valid and critical, they are also disparaging. Xicana Indígenas are identifying themselves as a people that are in diaspora, a people that have been economically deported by their governments and forced to seek new places to live, work, and combat the political, social, and economic repressions and oppressions left behind. Perhaps, as Gutiérrez points out, Xicanas, as a people, do not come from “one” place, but the “idea/ideology” of “Xicana Indígena” does clearly stem from a geographic location of the U.S. Southwest, a place many Xicanas/os identify as Aztlan. Xicana ideology (and identity), born in this space, began to disperse and, in effect, be in diaspora to other parts of the U.S. Further, Xicanas are restoring the feminine and claiming connection to their ancestors and ancestral places of origin throughout México, and Central/South America, and thus are identifying themselves as products of the diaspora of Indigenous peoples that left (or were forced from) their pueblos or original territories. Thus, this positionality of Xicanas (as opposed to Gutiérrez) restores a woman-centered connection to land and roots to our land bases in the many places on this continent.

Xicanas identify with this displacement and forced migration, which is a phenomenon happening globally. Studying how Xicanas deal with migration, cyclical movements, and transnational realities—through this notion of Aztlan, or creating home in new places—will impact hemispheric and global Indigenous studies. The notion of Aztlan has evolved; it can be in many places or expressed in different ways by different peoples and experiences. It begs the question: How do Xicanas/os maintain their “Indigenous identity” despite transnational migration? Whereas in México, a person may be considered mestizo or Indian, once they are in the U.S. they are identified as Mexican, Hispanic, Latino, or until 1974 they were identified

as white. Returning to Aztlan or a Xicana self-identity can mean returning north or it can mean returning home, wherever home may be. It can be an experience and a belief.

At the 2011 ENLACE Intercontinental Gathering of Indigenous Women of the Americas in Hueyapan, Morelos, I was able to participate in a working group that was creating a document to declare what it means to be an Indigenous woman working for political and social change. I found this group to speak to the answers I was seeking, in terms of how Xicanas define themselves and their desires. In this working group, the women declared that “to be an empowered woman means to exercise my rights, my voice, make decisions for myself, be free, be educated, love myself, know the possibilities I have, strive for consciousness, truth, transformation, freedom, justice, and rebeldía.”⁵ All of these qualities are the same vision that Xicana Indígenas hold for themselves. In this working group, many of the women discussed that the men continue to represent women in political spaces, locally, nationally, and internationally. Most of the social structures in place continue to be *machista*, male dominated, and patriarchal: the Church, politics, home, and the world itself are constructed by men as leaders and decision-makers. Therefore, the women declared that there were only two possibilities, to either create a new system or to change the existing system. One woman in the group stated that, as women, “we know what we need to do, but patriarchy has saturated our every state of being and place of existence, that fear keeps us from taking a stand: fear of poverty; fear of violence” (personal notes).

These fears also keep women divided. Their vision included equality for men and women, not a reverse power dynamic of women ruling over men. They demanded transparency in all levels of leadership, beginning with the home. The women also demanded that we must look at Mother Earth as someone with her own rights, and, as women, we have to speak on her behalf. In addition, our spirituality needs to be practiced, not talked about. The lessons from this working group articulated the very same desires and aspirations that Xicana Indígenas endeavor to achieve. It is impossible for any one person to decide the right way to be Xicana. The desire for a “pure or authentic moment or form” leads to “a negation of a long history of heterogeneity and failure to come to grips with that history” (Hernández 2005, 131).

Roberto Hernández argues that “the origins of the Chicano Movement was a union of multiple organizations and struggles of similar, yet by no means identical political persuasions” (2005, 125). People were using the concept of Chicano in dramatically different ways. The same can be argued about Xicana Indígena identity. There is no uniform definition, motive, or practice of either. Hernández believes “it is more useful, and in fact, historically accurate, to speak of [any] such divisions as the anxiety and inability to come to terms with the wide range of perspectives that coexisted alongside an often monolithic Chicano cultural nationalism” (2005, 128). The paradigm shift in Chicano nationalism not only called for an Indigenous consciousness, but proclaimed that Chicanas/os are heterogeneous with multifarious realities. From global politics, hemispheric consciousness, and the need for Indigenous solidarity emerges a new generation calling themselves Xicana/o.

Through transnationalism, the growing population of Indigenous Mexicanas/os in the U.S. is going to continue to change understandings of identity and spirituality: “The struggle for Indigenous identity and self-determination is a dynamic and on-going process, demanding constant self-assessment and evaluation” (Grounds, Tinker, and Wilkens 2003, 101). The shifting meanings and understandings of identity will certainly

allow for new ideas/thoughts/terms to emerge. According to John Trudell, “we have to think about the terminology that we use. We must think about thoughts that go with that terminology . . . because if we do not think about this struggle we are engaged in, if we do not use our minds to think about the coming generations, then [the invaders] will win their psychological genocide against us” (Grounds, Tinker, Wilkins 2003, 128-129). Perhaps today many use the term Chicana or Xicana lightly, without the context that I have presented in this article, but historically the call for a Xicana Indígena identity is really a call for a “compromiso” or a commitment to one’s community. The terms, names, and language that Xicanas/os challenge and/or assert create new beliefs, which then create new forms of knowledge, epistemologies, and worldviews. “Xicana Indígena” is still in process; it is not a finished project, but, rather, constantly in flux. Xicana/o Indígena becomes more than an identity or label, but rather a philosophy and a social plan to combat the on-going colonialism. There is no way to get rid of colonialism. It continues to shape the legacy of identity and the economic possibilities of countries and political regimes. However, asserting a Xicana Indígena identity forces us to confront our conditions and create “lucha/fight.” Part of this fight or struggle is to know our history—to really KNOW our history. Knowing our history will allow Xicana Indígenas to know themselves. For some, Xicana Indígena may seem redundant, as the term Xicana in and of itself means Indigenous, but it serves a purpose. Stating that I am Xicana Indígena emphasizes that there are many pueblos and I am distinct but connected to many. Xicana Indígena decrees a departure from older, nationalist notions of Chicano identity and insists on a firm declaration of indigeneity. Xicana Indígena continues to be in the “(re)defining” process, as its meaning has not yet achieved a collective consensus (it exists informally, but not formally). As of yet, there has not been a national gathering where a wide representation of Xicanas have come together to discuss this. I hope that this piece inspires such a gathering (not unlike the 1969 National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado), where Xicana Indígena women can gather and write the manifesto to create the updated philosophical, political, social, and spiritual agenda for the new future of our communities.

Endnotes

1. Members of Chicana/o theater.
2. While the term Xicana derives from Nahuatl, it is important to note that the Nahuatl language existed before the Mexica migrated south into Mexico City. Therefore, Xicana is not Mexica-centric, but instead can be viewed from a broader perspective, one that embraces the larger “Uto-Aztecan” language family spoken throughout the western hemisphere. The contemporary notion that “Xicana” is only related to Mexicas (versus other Indigenous peoples within México) came about because of the Danza movement that at times inferred such a limited meaning. In fact, the etymology of Mexica/México cannot be confirmed.
3. This quote was found in an art exhibit at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Zacatecas, 2010.
4. This information is documented in my personal notes, having been one of the Xicanas that was part of the delegation.
5. From my personal notes.

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Applying Latina Feminist Philosophical Approaches to the Self to Reinterpret Anti-Immigrant Politics in America

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Introduction

Using philosophical concepts to analyze everyday politics can be a difficult task. Yet, from the perspective of political philosophy, some patterns in American politics may be better understood—and potentially better transformed—by considering them through philosophical lenses. One possible area for deeper philosophical analysis is the anti-immigrant hostility directed against Latinos that often surges during times of economic downturn. America's current spike in anti-immigrant politics includes both harsh deportation policies and other forms of anti-Latino hostilities—many of which are directed particularly at Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans.¹ Both Republicans and Democrats have used political strategies that feature anti-immigrant hostility, even though doing so often contradicts other values that they espouse. Thus today, frustration runs high among many Latinos as just immigration reform is cast aside in favor of immigrant bashing deployed as part of election year vote pandering.

In this essay, I suggest that it is possible to delve more deeply and philosophically into the long-standing—and often irrationally self-defeating—appeal of immigrant bashing in American politics. Public debate on immigration often focuses on the multiple identities of Latinos. Yet, it is also worthwhile to consider the identities of those who are heavily invested in anti-immigrant hostility. In this we might ask: Does the tenacious appeal of anti-immigrant perspectives for some white Americans have more to do with how their identities are stabilized in times of economic turmoil than with the immigration issues superficially claimed? To consider this possibility, I will argue that the philosophical approaches to the self that have been offered by various Latina feminist philosophers are especially important lenses for considering such a question. Latina feminist approaches to the self largely regard the self as characterized by multiplicity. This multiplicity includes a potential for inner contradiction and fragmentation that can produce both critical thought and agency on one hand, but also unconscious thought processes that potentially can have negative outcomes on the other. These Latina feminist approaches to the self thus offer resources to explore the possible relationship between identity contradiction and fragmentations and anti-immigrant politics in America.

In this essay, I explore this proposal in three steps. In part one, I briefly describe main elements of the Latina feminist philosophical approaches to the self that are potentially most useful for reconsidering the character of anti-immigrant politics in America. In part two, I offer an example of the kind of analysis in political philosophy that I am proposing. To do so, I interpret a recent essay by Rogers Smith on identity formation and governmental obligation toward Mexican immigrants. In my analysis, I consider how possible identity contradictions associated with the American Dream may be a key source of anti-immigrant hostility. In part three, I further explore the potential for considering identity contradictions and unconscious thought processes by turning to recent work by feminist philosopher Jane Flax. Flax argues that race-related melancholia and self-splitting among white Americans today plays a major role in the perpetuation of racial hierarchies.

Drawing also on Latina feminist philosophical approaches to the self, I briefly apply Flax's framework to recurrent anti-Latino immigrant politics in America. In closing, I propose that like melancholia, collective trauma may play a role generating identity contradictions among white Americans that can, in turn, help sustain immigrant bashing and hobble public deliberation regarding justice for Latino immigrants.

Latina Feminist Philosophers and Perspectives on the Self

Among the most important intellectual contributions of Latina feminist philosophers over the last quarter century has been the development of alternative approaches to the self that contest the traditional concept of the unitary subject. In producing outlooks that challenge the received approach to the self, various Latina philosophers have drawn insight from their ethnic and gendered experiences to shed light on the complexity of subjectivity. For example, in her famous account of *mestiza* consciousness, Gloria Anzaldúa drew upon her Chicana experience in the Texas borderlands to highlight the diverse multiplicity of identities potentially within self. This multiplicity may contain contradictions, tensions, and forms of self-alienation that are internalized while living within overlapping life worlds (1987, 2000). Anzaldúa's concept of *mestiza* consciousness has been widely influential in numerous scholarly fields. It is frequently applied and interpreted by Latina philosophers who have also advanced their own approaches to identity and inner *mestizaje* (Lugones 1994; Alarcón 1994; Sandoval 2000; Martín-Alcoff 2006; Barvosa 2008; Beltran 2010). Together these and other philosophical projects by Latina scholars have opened the door to regarding inner contradiction and multiplicity as not always and only sources of inner struggle and pain to be avoided or resolved, *but also at times* as potentially rich resources for agency and critical thinking (Barvosa 2008, 83-108).

In locating value in inner diversity, Latina philosophers such as Norma Alarcón have rightly resisted calls to regard the concept of *mestiza* consciousness as describing a universal experience (1994). Conceptually, the internal multiplicity of *mestiza* consciousness is not a pre-given quality of all human subjectivity. Rather, whatever inner diversity, contradiction, and/or self-alienation exist within a person must be produced by specific language-mediated social constructions and formations. To regard *mestiza* consciousness not as *the* human condition, does not logically lead to the conclusion that *mestiza* consciousness is *a* human condition that is limited only to Chicanas. As Anzaldúa herself pointed out, there are many people who straddle different kinds of social divides. As such, these other border crossers may also inhabit varied social locations and potentially internalize a diverse configuration of identities.² These multiple dimensions may include contradictions and forms of self-alienation that Anzaldúa considered the hallmarks of *mestiza* consciousness (Anzaldúa 1987, 63; Barvosa 2011, 124-130).

With this in mind, I suggest that it is possible and potentially useful to continue to apply Latina feminist approaches to the self to an increasingly wide array of scholarly questions. Certainly, Latina feminist accounts of the self can continue to help us achieve deeper understanding of the productive dimensions of inner diversity—particularly in the subjectivities and agency of people of color who have experienced colonization and imperialism. In addition, however, it can also increasingly help us to explore the pros and cons of specific configurations of identity contradictions, and/or forms of self-fragmenting alienation that might also exist among (seemingly) monocultural white Americans of relative privilege. Using the concept of *mestiza* consciousness as a lens to consider those

who perpetrate inter-group violence already has precedent. In *Borderlands*, for example, Anzaldúa used her account of *mestiza* consciousness to analyze the misogyny perpetrated by many Chicanos as hatred born from the inner contradictions of male privilege and ethnic subordination (1987, 83-85). In her analysis, Anzaldúa proposed that real gender equity would not be realized until we could at once reject and resist patriarchy on one hand *and* on the other hand compassionately witness and address the inner turmoil that caused some Chicanos to use misogyny to salve the unacknowledged pain and fear caused by their inner contradictions. In holding this productive tension—a solid refusal and compassionate recognition—Anzaldúa suggested that we could, in turn, open new avenues for change and restoration in which hate would no longer be needed to obscure and soothe unproductive inner contradictions.

Using the same form of analysis, it is worth asking whether a similar dynamic animates forms of racial and ethnic hierarchies in America. Is the hostility toward Latino immigrants that surges during nearly every economic downturn born in part from identity contradictions within the white Americans who lash out at immigrants in times of instability? Asking this question as a scholarly task would be partly an empirical/political inquiry, and partly an application of new philosophical concepts of the self as decentered and multiple. It would lead to considering what specific contradictions, if any, may exist within those whites who engage in anti-immigrant hostilities. The potential goal of such a philosophical analysis would be to simultaneously refuse anti-immigrant hatreds *while also* holding a witness to whatever pain, self-alienation, and/or contradictions that might underlie those hatreds. W.E.B. du Bois' concept of double consciousness has been used to suggest that many whites do in fact have deep internal contradictions regarding race.³ Yet, the philosophical approaches to the self that various Latina scholars have offered also consider a variety of identity formations beyond the white/black racial binary. In this sense—and as outlined below—Latina feminist approaches to the self may be critical in philosophizing new ways to understand racial and ethnic conflict that could, in turn, help advance greater social justice for all.

The American Dream and the Formation of Identity Contradictions

In his recent essay "Living in a Promiseland? Mexican Immigration and American Obligation," Rogers Smith offers a timely and astute meditation on the principles that ideally should shape contemporary U.S. immigration reform (Smith 2011). Smith's recent contribution builds upon his previously proposed "principle of constituted identities." In that principle he holds that when governments engage in coercive acts that shape the identities, practices, and aspirations of a people, those coercive acts create an obligation for that government to help the affected realize the identities and aspirations that have been foisted upon them (Smith 2008). Smith's more recent contribution is contextualized in part by the unproductive quality of current public political deliberation on the issue of immigration. He notes especially the most recent assaults on the rights of Mexican origin peoples in the United States in Arizona, specifically SB 1070 and the effort to eliminate Ethnic Studies—specifically Chicana/o Studies—from the Arizona school curriculum.

For the question at hand in this essay—i.e., Can Latina feminist approaches to the self offer resources to explore a possible relationship between identity contradictions and anti-immigrant politics?—Smith's essay "Living in a Promiseland" offers several helpful starting points. First, Smith's argument urges us to *look below the surface* of current political discourse to the meanings and historically derived hierarchies beneath

those discourses. Those hierarchies are often concealed and dismissed by prevailing political discourses, not because they are irrelevant to contemporary social justice, but because they may too uncomfortably reveal the underlying stakes of persistent injustice.

Second, Smith addresses both *identity formation* and the *intersection of identity-related political claims with broad social and economic conflicts* (Smith 2011). Not unlike Latina philosophers who have emphasized how multiple identities are derived from hierarchies in social life, Smith contends that Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants have been coercively burdened with the task of negotiating multiple identities that are not allowed to fit neatly together in current official social constructions. It is this coercion—imposed by U.S. Government policies that define and limit options for integrating dual cultural commitments—that creates a governmental obligation to foster just immigration practices. Philosophically, Smith's case for obligation may (or may not) be a persuasive one. Yet, empirically speaking the social and political climate in Arizona and elsewhere in recent years reveals a relentless obstacle to exercising such a potential obligation. This obstacle emerges when significant numbers of mainstream Americans *identify as Americans* based on the self-stabilizing idea that in order to justly claim American identity and/or citizenship, all immigrants and their descendants must become like them—i.e., white, monolingual English speakers, identified only with mainstream American ethnic culture.

This persistent obstacle of assimilationist identity formation among some anti-immigrant whites reveals a core tension in Smith's argument—albeit a potentially productive tension. Smith notes that when western states such as Arizona were admitted into the Union, whites were prodded by the U.S. Government into adopting postures of white supremacy against Mexican and Native Peoples as a condition of admission to statehood. By Smith's own logic then, the U.S. Government's obligation to help officially coerced people achieve their imposed identity aspirations likewise extends to those whites who aspire to xenophobic exclusion and white racial privilege as a result of exposure to projects of American nation building.⁴ Smith acknowledges this contradictory set of commitments. But he downplays their collision course by speculating that federal payment of fiscal burdens of immigration might smooth the way to peaceful incorporation of Latino immigrants in states like Arizona.

Taking up Smith's call to explore below the surface, Smith's shift from focusing on identity formation to incorporating economic concerns implies that there may be an important link between xenophobic identity formations and the financial worries of people in Arizona. This is quite plausible. Historically, we know that anti-Mexican immigrant backlash in America has often coincided with economic downturns (Vargas 2010). Logically, this pattern in the flare up of anti-immigrant sentiments suggests, in turn, that some elements driving anti-immigrant politics have significantly to do with economic anxieties felt by many mainstream white Americans, rather than with sporadic outrage at what Mexican immigrants are commonly doing. If so, then the path to addressing anti-immigrant conflict and spiking xenophobia could potentially lie in better understanding and responding to the underlying economic anxieties. These anxieties may be the (undeclared) flame fueling overheated and often-circular public "debate" over the fate of unauthorized working Latino immigrants.

As Smith's fine contribution also demonstrates, so often the focus of immigration debate is on the multiple identities of immigrants. Yet, the identities of those who oppose extending rights to already resident immigrants should, I suggest, be

thoroughly considered as well and reexamined for inner tensions that might be manifesting periodically as (re)ignited anti-Mexican hostilities. To illustrate the possibilities of this approach, it is useful to imagine looking into the identity contradictions potentially formed in Americans by the often-illusory promises of the American Dream narrative—a narrative with which many Americans of many backgrounds ground their American identities.

Since at least the nineteenth century, the narrative of the American Dream has combined with free market ideology and immigrant arrival discourses construct widely held identities in ways that are, arguably, in contradiction with the social and political formations that actually exist. In the American Dream narrative, all people who live in America—including all immigrants—are free and equal, with equal opportunities available to them. As such, the rise and fall of individual Americans and all those who come to America thus purportedly depend on individual merit and hard work alone. When people in America work hard, their hopes and dreams will be inevitably realized. Consequently, America has no need for a social safety net, for our efforts and ingenuity provide our security.

The American Dream fairytale is, of course, largely untrue. Unruly markets, labor exploitation, long-term downward pressure on wages, and intense capital accumulation among a small minority have always meant that beyond the bootstrap story, any hard working person in America can find himself or herself destitute on short notice. This brutal economic truth also intersects with race and immigration factors in that the volatile American economy has always depended for its growth on cheap labor—including enslaved Blacks and immigrant laborers. More proximate than any other labor pools, Mexican laborers have been recruited from Mexico's interior for over a century and a half, and then cast back when their presence was no longer convenient or profitable (Vargas 2010, 213-228). Like two sides of the same coin, on both sides of the American Dream narrative, Mexican and other Latino immigrants *and* mainstream white Americans are both subject to identity constructions built upon untruths that leave them in unstable conditions. Thus, any social identities that are constructed and stabilized with the American Dream narrative potentially contain the instability of a contradiction.

If this analysis of large-scale identity formation is plausible, then arguably the identities of all Americans—unauthorized immigrants and U.S. born—have been coercively formed to center on the bootstraps-to-riches myth of the American Dream. In times of mass economic turmoil and hardship, such as the 2008 downturn, the contraction hidden in the heart of our American Dream-based identities is touched and activated. In the activation of this contradiction, we witness and feel the unsettling fact that our hard work is never really enough. In this unsettling, our very identities are destabilized by this inner contradiction like the shifting fault line of an earthquake. Yet, as Anzaldúa and other Latina philosophers have stressed it can be highly painful to see, approach, and come to terms with such contradictory dimensions within our selves. As I have argued elsewhere, in such cases people may employ self-deceptions or other evasions to avoid facing a destabilizing identity contradiction (2008, 127-129). For some in economically hard hit Arizona, facing the bootstrap contradiction within their American identity may feel unbearable in times of brutal economic hardship.⁵ Seeing the American Dream as a seductive and subduing deception may be too destabilizing a disappointment to encounter. If so, distracting alternatives—like the scapegoating of immigrants—may discharge anger, divert attention from the underlying issue, and soothe the pain of frustration. If this salve is used widely, it can pick up political

momentum and superficial “legitimacy” while it also cloaks and misrepresents the underlying concerns at hand.

Using Latina philosophical accounts of the multiplicity of the self as a lens for analyses in this way may heighten our understanding of how group conflicts—including anti-immigrant politics—are perpetuated generation after generation. In this process of hostile external expression of inner turmoil, public political reasoning has little effect despite many references to justice and equity. In some ways, we already sense that anti-Mexican immigrant sentiment—including today’s deportations and raids—likely present a way to unleash economic anger *while also* turning eyes away from the real sources of economic disaster, thereby easing the tension of economic vulnerability of some whites. Yet, sensing that anti-immigrant sentiment is a safety valve to relieve intra-psychic disarray and consternation is not a sufficient basis for practical political response. Such response would need a detailed map and systematic interpretations of the most likely forms of large-scale identity contradictions and their sources. Such mapping could both advance our knowledge and bring philosophical perspectives and tools to the task of constructing more peaceful and productive solutions for chronic social unease and injustice. Ideally, newly constructed solutions would make anti-immigrant sentiment unnecessary as a means to soothe the unacknowledged and unresolved distress and pave the way to productive political deliberation on matters of real significance.

Melancholia and Unconscious Thought Processing in Immigration Politics

The work of Gloria Anzaldúa, María Lugones, and other Latina philosophers indicate that some inner contradictions in the self can be productive of critical thinking, agency, and potentially autonomy. Other inner contradictions, however, may remain unexamined resulting in unconscious thought processes that can result in negative outcomes. These outcomes may take place most often at an individual level. Yet when inner contradictions originate in broad social conflicts—e.g., war, colonization—those social influences can shape many people similarly leading to impacts on a mass scale. To consider the political significance of unconscious processing would involve not only seeing the self as decentered and multiple, but also looking into the specific ways in which inner identity contradictions can be formed. For instance, melancholia and collective trauma are two mechanisms by which self-fragmentations can be forged.

One indication of the potential of considering mass melancholia as a source of politically significant self-fragmentations can be found in the work of feminist political philosopher and practicing psychologist Jane Flax. In her recent book *Resonances of Slavery in Race/Gender Relations: Shadow at the Heart of American Politics* (2010) Flax offers a powerful and nuanced example of the philosophical and political value of taking social fragmentation of the self and the unconscious processing it can produce more into account. Flax argues that enduring racial and gender hierarchies in America are produced in significant part through unconscious operation of underlying racial melancholia. Here, melancholia is defined as an incomplete grieving that produces “the denial of the living presence of the past” (Flax 2010, 25). In this case, the incomplete grieving is regarding the past enslavement of Blacks that still reverberates in American social relations today despite all protestations to the contrary. The mass denial of slavery’s legacy diverts us from the painful encounter with slavery, its losses, and its consequences. This, in turn, creates a collective psychological disposition—a political unconscious—that leads to the cyclical recreation over and over of the same racial hierarchies even as we cast a blind eye to that cyclical and

chronic reenactment. Paralyzed by this self-imposed myopia, the nation as a whole is stuck recreating aspects of the past in ways it endlessly denies (Alexander 2010). In this unconscious loop, America will sustain its racial hierarchies until the work of mourning—work that could resolve this melancholia—is undertaken and completed.

Although Flax’s argument focuses on anti-Black racism, her utilization of a working framework of melancholia is potentially also applicable to interpreting other self-fragmentations that may be contributing to the ongoing subordination of Latinos and Latino immigrants. Space is too limited to offer a full application of Flax’s approach to anti-immigrant politics, but for the sake of illustrating philosophical possibilities, let me apply just one of three elements from her framework that she defines as common manifestations of melancholic fragmentations in mainstream white America. These are: 1) the *denials within the narrative of American exceptionalism*, 2) the *subjective identity investments* that can be part of sustained melancholic denial, and 3) the *bonds of hate* that can serve as the basis for shared identity in given groups and communities (2010, 133-134, 37-40, 39).

While all three of these may be present in anti-immigrant politics, the third of these—the use of bonds of hate—may be particularly utilized as a means to bring together otherwise disparate and unconnected peoples into “communities” opposed to immigrant rights in Arizona. Gregory Rodriguez has argued, for example, that anti-Mexican immigrant dynamics in Arizona are driven in large part by the post-ethnic whites that have drifted from northern regions to Arizona. It is these new arrivals to the Southwest who most actively resent *and strongly react* to the thick ethnicity that Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and Native Americans have retained of ethnic heritages against the century and a half onslaught of “Americanizing” pressures to release them. In a recent interview, Rodriguez discusses the volatility of the encounter of white ethnic impoverishment with the ethnic endurance of Mexican origin peoples and Native Americans in what he calls a “white identity crisis” among newcomers in Arizona:

The phenomenon in Arizona is that you have a migration of post-ethnic whites, of people who have moved beyond their ethnic origins and have forgotten their immigrant origins . . . [who] have moved from upper plains or from the central Midwest to a place like Arizona. And they feel uprooted. They don’t feel rooted to America in an ethnic sense. And they are threatened by the presence of ethnicity in Arizona, and the presence of Mexicans and Native Americans in Arizona. And I would argue that actually in Arizona that has always been the problem; that in essence this has always been white folks moving to the Southwest and feeling threatened by those who do have strong ethnicity. (Rodriguez 2011)

As fifth or sixth generation immigrants to America these internal migrants to Arizona have become removed from their own immigrant ethnic heritage. Subject to assimilationist pressures, they are all no longer understood as German, Polish, Swedish, or Norwegian in heritage. Rather, they are all conflated as “Anglo Americans” rhetorically subsumed (and hence retroactively implicated) in the malevolent forces of British empire and the bloodshed of imperialist expansion across the continent. Arguably, this homogenization—the self-inflicted loss of ethnic richness—becomes one of the wages of white privilege in the complex grid of ethnic, racial, class, and gender constraint in American society.

Employing Flax’s account of self-fragmenting melancholic denial of the past in the present, we might see the loss of

immigrant ethnicity among whites as a loss that has yet to be acknowledged and fully mourned. Potentially, the failure to fully encounter that loss may now sustain a white melancholia of ethnic privation for some whites. This not-fully-acknowledged sense of loss might be felt especially when people are faced with the commonplace, often-repetitive commercialism that stands as mainstream American culture where rich cultural traditions of European immigrants have been erased. Encountering the ever-invigorated (and so often borrowed) sound, color, and vibrancy of Mexican culture in America nettles the underlying denial of the homogenized white-ethnic impoverishment—a denial that is not soothed by loud self-designation as the “mainstream” of American heritage.

If a melancholic denial of lost white immigrant ethnic heritage exists, it might manifest politically and socially in two mutually reinforcing ways that continue to shape anti-immigrant politics in Arizona today. One manifestation may be in the relentless drive to denigrate the ethnic heritage of Mexican origin peoples and Native Americans (even as aspects of both are appropriated at times to literally enrich consumer practices). This has been seen recently in the elimination of acclaimed Chicana/o Studies in Tucson schools.⁶ A second manifestation may perhaps be seen in the drive to construct social identity formations that stabilize white identities and communities through bonds of hate. In places such as Arizona migrating whites may have little to bind them across the social atomization of American individualism except a common and now greatly weakening consumer culture—limited resources for constructing a sense of self connected in community. In the absence of more robust ethnic ties, bonds of hate may offer easily cultivated material with which to bind an otherwise uprooted collection of displaced whites who are not linked by their own common life world, but instead by common opposition to Mexican-origin and Native cultures.

Finally, in addition to the melancholia proposed by Jane Flax, collective trauma may also be a useful lens for considering the sources and effects of unconscious thought processes associated with fragmentation of the self. In some ways, the fragmentation of the self through large-scale social traumas is already a major theme in the contributions of Latina philosophers who discuss the inner turmoil caused by colonization, racism, and ethnic group conflict (Anzaldúa 1987). Given this existing emphasis, it is worthwhile to consider how collective trauma can produce specific forms of self-fragmentation, self-alienation, and inner contradictions that may then manifest in unconscious thought processes. These unconscious processes can include obscured sources of resistance and strong reactivity that can derail public political discussions on immigration and other “hot-button” topics.

The word “trauma” is often used to suggest that specific things—wars, accidents, violence, conflicts, and abuse—are traumatic per se. Yet from various clinical perspectives, trauma is increasingly regarded as an embodied phenomenon. Nothing is in and of itself inherently traumatizing. Rather, trauma begins when a particular experience overwhelms a person’s normal capacities for interpretation and response and activates the body’s emergency systems. These emergency systems mobilize resources and capacities for survival—particularly the physical and biochemical responses of the survival mechanisms of fight, flight, or freeze (Scaer 2005). The details of these processes are far beyond the focus of this short essay. I gesture toward these embodied elements of trauma here in order to indicate generally the potential role that trauma could play in public reaction to specific triggering events as follows.

Very basically, under non-traumatizing circumstances the emergency survival systems of the human subjectivity—i.e.,

embodied consciousness—can turn on and off without residual effects or long-term negative consequences. However, when trauma takes place, the standard shut-off of emergency systems is unresolved. When this happens, it is possible for the emergency systems of embodied consciousness to become easily activated—and/or potentially chronically activated—in *non-emergency situations* that bear minor resemblance to or contain oblique reminders of the original circumstances of trauma. This holdover or hair-trigger activation of survival systems in non-emergency situations is what scholars define as trauma itself. Post-trauma reactivity can include cognitive, emotional, and physical hypersensitivity, patterned defensiveness, and temporary inability to engage measured reasoning or other non-emergency sensibilities in critical thinking (Levine 2010). This kind of trauma patterning in the body fragments the self by splitting calm cognition-based responses to specific social cues from the hyper-reactive scripts of trauma. When activated by contexts, the latter will generally override the former. Hence, a traumatized soldier may react to a loud but unthreatening noise as if he were once again on the battlefield, despite his immediately preceding rational awareness that he is no longer in a war zone.

Considering the many sources of potential collective trauma—the Cold War, 9/11, economic crises, group conflicts—it is worth asking whether the embodied mechanisms of trauma might be animating mass scale public responses more often than we realize. Various overwhelming events may have left traumatic traces in the general population that are activated by specific triggers such as economic instability. For example, the public debate over immigration in states such as Arizona is arguably marked by many intensive, shrill, and reason-resistant reactions to Mexican immigration that are reminiscent of post-traumatic reactivity. The collective political result of such reactivity may be illogical, alarmed, unhearing political cacophony—all qualities of today’s immigration “debate.” If this relationship is plausible, then the underlying fragmentation arising from collective trauma may be contributing to the derailing of reasoned political deliberation on immigration. The material result is heightened public defensiveness, punitive policies, and general inaction toward the social justice aims that our society declares itself to value.

Conclusion

Various Latina feminist philosophers have stressed that the intra-psychic terrain is complex, varied, and sometimes strongly contradictory depending on the social influences that have shaped the self. These philosophical contributions have stressed that grappling with inner contradictions can be a productive basis for agency and critical thought. However, facing inner contradiction can also be painful and/or difficult to achieve. Some individuals may not be fully conscious of their operative contradictions. Others may seek to avoid potentially painful self-encounters in ways that may have detrimental personal consequences and/or contribute to large-scale political conflict. As I have suggested above, the regular recurrence of anti-immigrant hostility directed at Latinos during economic downturns in the United States may be one area in which the dynamics of self-fragmentation are at work.

Potentially at least, identity contradictions and fragmentations within the psyches of some, if not many, mainstream white Americans underlie persistent patterns of anti-immigrant hostility and politics in America. The result is the perpetuation of a political quagmire in which reason-based public deliberation is stymied by mass reactivity arising from the activation of constructed identity contradictions, unrecognized mass melancholia, residual trauma, or other intra-psychic fragmentations. If so, then the analytic perspectives on the

self offered by numerous Latina feminist philosophers can provide helpful tools for assessing this possibility. Applying these important tools and perspectives in new ways in political philosophy may help to shed new light on underlying sources of anti-immigrant politics in America.

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Endnotes

1. Recent examples include harsh anti-immigrant restrictions on Arizona, Alabama, and other states: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/11/opinion/sunday/when-states-put-out-the-unwelcome-mat.html?emc=eta1>; Federal accusations of racial profiling of Latinos by police in East Haven, Connecticut: http://articles.boston.com/2012-02-14/news/31059868_1_tacos-maturo-rebukes#.T3Je2Wvyxsc_email; and the elimination of Chicano Studies programs

in Tucson, Arizona: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/19/education/racial-lens-used-to-cull-curriculum-in-arizona.html?emc=eta1>.

2. However, this inclusive account of the concept does not eliminate the fact that Chicana and Latina thinkers have authored this and other related concepts, or that the lived experiences of Latinas have been a vital wellspring of inspiration not only for Anzaldúa philosophy, but for the work of many other Latina feminist philosophers as well.
3. In his essay "Behind Blue Eyes" Howard Winant, interpreting W.E.B. du Bois, proposed that whites too can have a racial double consciousness formed by contradictory socialization to racist discourses contradicting discourses of racial equity (1997). In her study of students who attended racially integrated schools, Amy Wells (2009) finds strong evidence for this double consciousness among her white respondents.
4. In his 2008 piece "The Principle of Constituted Identities," however, Smith contends that the degree of obligation is derived from the amount of coercion that has gone into identity formation. If so, then it may be that the obligation is less to xenophobic whites than to Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans among whom the coercive identity formation has been far more extensive.
5. Arizona posted the second highest foreclosure rate in the nation in both 2009 and 2010 as reported by RealtyTrac, with 5.73 percent of Arizona housing units receiving at least one foreclosure notice in 2010. See RealtyTrac annual report (RealtyTrac 2011).
6. See endnote one for reference.

SUBMISSIONS

Call for papers

The fall 2012 issue of the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* will be open to any topic on Hispanic/Latino philosophy. Submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Electronic submissions are preferred. All submissions should be limited to 5,000 words (twenty double-spaced pages) and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and *The Chicago Manual of Style* formatting.

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Book reviews in any area of Hispanic/Latino philosophy, broadly construed, are welcome. Submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Book reviews may be short (500 words) or long (1,500 words). Electronic submissions are preferred.

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The *APA Newsletters* adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use italics instead of underlining. Use an “em dash” (—) instead of a double hyphen (--).

Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style:

- John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90.

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