

## Out of the Labyrinth, Into the Race: The Other Discourse of Chicano=Mexicano Difference

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### Abstract

In an issue of *Inscriptions* entitled “Traveling Theory, Traveling Theorists,” James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar alternately pose the questions: What counts as theory in specific traditions? Who counts as a theorist? How do different populations, classes and genders travel? What kinds of knowledges, stories and theories do they produce? In this essay I will address some of these questions within a specific Chicano context by examining an intellectual and cultural movement that follows a semi-public route;

reconfigures the intellectual/theoretical; transports populations, classes, nations, and genders “selectively;” and lays one of the foundations for an authoritative tradition and epistemology in Chicano Studies. As my title suggests, I am referring here to me movement “out of the labyrinth into the race” that enabled a selective incorporation of Octavio Paz and his essay, *THE Labyrinth of Solitude* (1961) into a Chicano movement discourse which featured Difference.

### Resumen

En un artículo de registros titulado “Teoría Viajante, Teóricos Viajantes”, James Clifford y Vivek Dhareshwar exponen alternadamente las preguntas: ¿Qué vale como teoría en tradiciones específicas? ¿Quién vale como teórico? ¿De que manera las diferentes poblaciones, clases sociales y géneros viajan? ¿Qué tipos de conocimientos, historias y teorías producen estos? En este ensayo, me referiré a algunas de estas preguntas dentro de un contexto chicano específico, examinando un movimiento intelectual y cultural que sigue una ruta semipública, reconfigura lo intelectual/teórico, transporta poblaciones, clases sociales, naciones y géneros “selectivamente”, y presenta una de las fundaciones para una tradición autoritaria y epistemología en estudios chicanos. Como mi título sugiere, me refiero aquí al movimiento “fuera del laberinto hacia dentro de la raza” que posibilita una incorporación selectiva de Octavio Paz. y de su ensayo *El laberinto de la soledad* (1961) al discurso de un movimiento chicano signado por la Diferencia

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To Ana Nieto Gómez, *Women Struggle!*

## I. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

*Intellectual, Generational, and Contextual Frames*

In an issue of *Inscriptions* entitled “Traveling Theory, Traveling Theorists,” James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar alternately pose the questions: What counts as theory in specific-traditions? Who counts as a theorist? How do different populations, classes and genders travel?<sup>2</sup> What kinds of knowledges, stories and theories do they produce?<sup>3</sup>

In this essay I will address some of these questions within a specific Chicano context by examining an intellectual and cultural movement that follows a semi-public route;

reconfigures the intellectual/theoretical;

transports populations, classes, nations, and genders “selectively”; and lays one of the foundations for an authoritative tradition and epistemology in Chicano Studies. As my title suggests, I am referring here to the movement ‘out of the labyrinth into the race’ that enabled a selective incorporation of Octavio Paz and his essay, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1961)<sup>4</sup> into a Chicano movement discourse which featured Difference. The choice to remember this circulation of intellectual practices was inspired by a series of conversations that I had with Chicano critics in the eighties they went to great lengths to claim Octavio Paz as *the* (intellectual) precursor and to establish an uninterrupted Mexican tradition on this side of the U.S.-Mexican border even though such an appropriation necessarily meant once again reinventing his political and textual personas. One of the most memorable conversations that I had about Paz’s legacy was with a critic who tried to impress upon me the necessity of contextualizing generational movements and influences when organizing an alternative ethnography of Chicana/o intellectuals.<sup>5</sup> Without taking into account that I myself had read *The Labyrinth of Solitude* in an undergraduate Chicano Studies Course at U.C. Berkeley in the early seventies but fully cognizant of the fact that I had pursued graduate study within the Literature Department at U.C. San Diego, he said to me: “Paz was important to us, the way Foucault or Jameson are important to you younger critics...Mexican literature was all the context we had.”<sup>6</sup>

While there are many things that can be engaged and disputed here (not the least of which is the unqualified linkage be-

1 I would like to thank my brother, Rafael Chabrán, for taking me to UC Berkeley; my sister, Yolanda Chabram-Butler, and my mother, Lila González Chabram, for teaching me what it means to be a woman and an adult survivor of divorce; my tía Myrtha for introducing me to Chicano Studies; my brother Ricardo (Chabrán) for helping me to locate these materials; my compañero Zaré Dernerseian for the editorial help; and the group at UCSD for providing an atmosphere conducive to critical thinking. In particular I would like to acknowledge productive conversations with Rosaura Sánchez, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, and Sylvia Lizárraga around the idealism of culturalist constructions. Carlos Blanco Aguinaga formulated an early critique of Octavio Paz, entitled “El laberinto fabricado por Octavio Paz,” in *Aztlán*, Vol 3, 1 (1973): 1-12. Finally I would like to acknowledge the writers whose works are critiqued in this essay (they have provided my generation with a lot to contemplate).

2 James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar, “Preface,” *Inscriptions*, 5: 1 (1989): y

3 James Clifford, “Notes on Travel and Theory,” *Inscriptions*, p. 183.

4 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico*. Translated by Lysander Kemp (New York: Evergreen Press, 1961).

5 I do not mean to suggest that this critic offered the type of ‘uninterrupted Mexican legacy that I describe above.

6 Juan Rodríguez, Interview by Angie Chabram, May, 1986 This is an abbreviated response. Rodríguez also referred to other writers in his insightful recollection. I would like to thank him for reflecting on the critical trajectory of other members of his generation and for offering me this interview

tween Foucault, Jameson and Paz and the identification of Mexican literature with a high brow masculine tradition) this observation is important because it confirms important shifts in theoretical preferences<sup>7</sup> and conceptual movements, shifts which are largely ignored within U.S. based representational landscapes of transnational global theories and movements. Within these landscapes intellectual and theoretical travels continue to be severely restricted particularly travels through a Mexico-U.S.-Chicana/o context notwithstanding the unprecedented reception of a book such as *Borderlands, La Frontera* (1987) and the dynamic circulation of Chicana/o Mexicana/o Latina/o productions across intellectual and international borders. The result of this is that our knowledge about the changing idioms and faces of theoretical travel is itself very limited, particularly in the cases of informal networks of cultural theory that migrate through alternative social and linguistic spaces.

At this time in history when Mexicans in the borderlands are being constructed as sources of cheap deportable labor, not makers of intellectual traditions that encourage area studies and theories in the U.S.; when Chicanas/os, Mexicanas/os, Latinas/os are once again subjected to cruel forms of surveillance and impoverishment because their Americanness is suspect; and when a nationalistic form of strategic essentialism is once again the selected program for struggle, it is important to remember that not only people but also ideas travel across Mexican-American borders. Similarly, it is important to examine those intellectual circuits/pathways that move Chicanas/os and Mexicanas/os beyond state sanctioned limits into particular social and intellectual partnerships.

As a way of drawing attention to some of the early intellectual partnerships and discursive repertoires that walked a “semi” public path across the border in the seventies, I examine a particular circulation of “native” theories that attempted to write “nuestra” diferencia chicana-mexicana from a Chicano movement discourse that projected itself transnationally upon intersecting with Octavio Paz and *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.<sup>8</sup> It is important to clarify that I do not examine this convergence of lo chicano/lo mexicano because it enacts a form of travel that we would do well to emulate — on the contrary, it crosses state sanctioned international borders<sup>9</sup> while restricting social possibilities and social movements. Thus, it furnishes a mode of travel that we need to destabilize, an emergent canon formation that we need to

7 I do not mean to suggest that all Chicanas/os promoted Paz universally in this way but rather to highlight the fact that for many Paz was an important theorist and the fact that this theoretical preference has gone undetected within mainstream representations. Finally, I would like to clarify that while the interest in Paz has subsided a bit, culturalist representations are still the staple of nationalist ideologies which cross borders in political and cultural discourses.

8 I do not examine all of the literature which promotes a connection to Paz. This literature counts with numerous interpretations and revisions which cannot be reduced to what is examined here. Nonetheless male centered representations of lo chicano and lo mexicano abound, however there are conflicting representations of Paz within these works which include: David Porath, “Existentialism and Chicanos. De Co-lores, Vol 1: 2 ( Spring 1972); 6 30; Eliu Carranza, *Pensamientos on los Chicanos: A Cultural Revolution*. (Berkeley: California Books, 1969); Armando Rendon, *Chicano Manifesto* (New York; Collier, 1971). Works which refuted the historical basis of Paz’s representation of Chicanismo but nonetheless incorporate some elements from *The Labyrinth* include: Arturo Madrid Barela, “In Search of the Authentic Pachuco.” *Aztlán*, 4: 1 (1973):31 60, and Octavio Romano V, “The Anthropology and Sociology of Mexican-Americans: The Distortion of History, *El Grito*, 2 (Winter 1968):13 26. For a more complete listing of these works, see Porath’s bibliography.

9 It crosses some state sanctioned borders and not others.

debunk, and a social identity that we need to challenge.<sup>10</sup>

Drawing from the idea that theoretical work can be a form of struggle,<sup>11</sup> I not only unearth but I also scrutinize one of the most problematic legacies of this intellectual partnership—the “collaborative” production of a patriarchal (trans)nationalist discourse that references an essential Chicano=Mexicano (masculinist and hetero-sexist) Difference. In my analysis, which is multi-sited, I target the broad range of social, political, cultural and theoretical practices that construct and promote this discourse of Chicano=Mexicano Difference, and I point to alternative Chicana practices that forcefully opposed it from other discursive fields.

The primary focus of my critical endeavor is a cluster of texts (a formal essay, a transcribed interview, and travel notes) that were authored, organized and published by José Armas, the managing editor of *De Colores*, a journal of emerging Raza philosophies,” in 1975.<sup>12</sup> Together these texts offer a double-voiced representation of lo chicano/lo mexicano (The Chicano/The Mexican): José Armas recovers Octavio Paz (as a precursor) and Chicanas (from the pages of *The Labyrinth of Solitude*) in an introductory essay, and later, Annas and Octavio Paz reflect on Chicano Mexicano social identities and dynamics (including Chicano liberation, women’s liberation, La Familia and more) in a transcribed interview that is prepared by *De Colores*.

## II. The Enabling Conditions

¿Ve usted cómo todo se junta:’ On the Road to Octavio Paz/On the Road to Nationalism: Lessons in Patriarchal Connectivity, Chicano=Mexicano Style

Entonces usted es el Chicano y yo soy el Mexicano. Pertenecemos a una nación, a una familia, a un barrio, a una época. ¿Ve usted cómo todo se junta? (Octavio Paz as transcribed in *De Colores*)<sup>13</sup>

At first glance, José Armas introduction to Octavio Paz appears to be your standard literary biography that once again re-anoints the great writers of Latin American Literature in the U.S. However this introduction, which appears in a journal that is defined as a “forum for controversial ideologies” and proposes to explain “what it means to be a Chicano,” also lapses into telling Chicano differences— politics, national identity, cultural history, marginalization, border crossings, and struggles. This “submerged” narrative is the narrative that emerges with full force, embarks on the Chicano “journey” to Octavio Paz, facilitates the encounter between Chicanos and Octavio Paz, and ultimately partners Chicanos and Octavio Paz

10 Pax’s theoretical legacy continues to be strong in Spanish Departments and in the political discourses of Chicanos Mexicanos who appeal to the idea of a family of Mexicans as a way of creating unity.

11 I am inspired by Stuart Hall here who proposed: “I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle..” I give the metaphor of struggle a different connotation here liecause in struggling with nationalism I do not struggle with “angels.” For his discussion see: “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies,” In *Cultural Studies* (eds) Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (Rout-ledge; New York, 1992): 280.

12 Jose Armas, “Octavio Paz: On the Journey to Octavio Paz,” and “Entrevista con Octavio Paz.” *De Colores*, Vol. 2; 2 (1975): 4 10 and 11 22, respectively.

13 This is a summary of Octavio Paz which incorporates a universalist perspective. Because this summary incorporates Paz’s view of the family, which I discuss later, I cite it here as a Mexican representation of familism even though I have extracted this quote from a different context. I quote directly from the transcribed interview, “entrevista,” without “correcting” (lie popular representation of Chicanol.

within a movimiento discourse that references Difference.

While this sixtyish “travel” narrative deviates from mainstream canonical representations because it refuses to police the borders between the literary, the cultural, and the political, and it endeavors to lay the foundation for an “alternative” intellectual tradition via Paz, it nonetheless engages in an all too familiar social and academic practice: patriarchal connectivity. From another context, the anthropologist Suad Joseph<sup>14</sup> suggests that patriarchal connectivity refers to a “patriarchal relational construct of the self” and to “connective relationships” that are organized in the context of patriarchal societies which promote male domination over females and “the mobilization of kinship structures, morality, and idioms to institutionalize and legitimate these [patriarchal] forms of power.” In the case at hand, patriarchal connectivity manifests itself at the discursive level through a series of exchanges between masculine intellectual figureheads/native ethnographers (José Armas and Octavio Paz) who mobilize patriarchal kinship structures as a way of reconfiguring Chicana/o-mexicana/o cultural and intellectual traditions, social identities, and political contestations.

In his introduction José Armas sets into motion a “native” dynamic of “patriarchal connectivity” by reclaiming Paz as a “surrogate father” of the Chicano intellectual and political movement.<sup>15</sup> With this dramatic gesture he reinscribes a cycle of masculine fertility and succession that was widely promoted by early representations of mestizaje which selectively targeted male bodies and identities as sites of masculine “Chicano” reproduction without attending to the presence of the female bodies or the concrete historical realities of female reproduction. Armas representation of Chicana/o Mexicana/o legacies also incorporates a familiar reversal of traditional Western patriarchal relations. Because of the devastating effects of colonialism, it is the Chicano son who must anoint (give birth to) his Mexican (surrogate) father and name him as the figurehead of a Chicana/o Mexicana/o intellectual tradition/family. However, it is understood that this arrangement is temporary; the consolidation of a full blown intellectual tradition that is Chicano will allow the son to occupy his rightful place at the head of the intellectual “family” here in Aztlán.

This is of course a highly symbolic reconstruction of the intellectual order that lurks behind José Armas positioning of Octavio Paz and Chicana/o productions within a patriarchal order. The gut-wrenching postmodern testimony of his failed attempts to set up meetings with Octavio Paz reveals the difficulties of achieving this type of patriarchal connectivity from Armas particular social and intellectual location. In fact, this testimony, which borders on a confessional, inadvertently exposes a number of glaring social, cultural, and political differences that almost threatened to disband a transnational patriarchal intellectual and political alliance that Annas assumed as a way of lifting Chicanos out of their marginal status within U.S. society and culture.

Although the trickle up theory that provided the impetus for the appropriation of

14 Suad Joseph, “Relationality and Ethnographic Subjectivity: Key Informants and the Construction of Person-hood in Fieldwork.” In (eds) D. Wolf and C.D. Derre, *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork* (Westview: Harper Collins, 1996): 108.

15 Octavio Paz propels this dynamic later on in a transcribed interview by tacitly accepting the idea that he is in fact a Chicano intellectual precursor (a role he flatly denies to the pachuco) and extending a paternal lineage of succession to his grandfather and his father. Jose Annas actually states that “[T]he groping Chicano embraced Paz. as their surrogate father who gave their identity some reassurance and offered some guidance from which to build their movement.” Annas, p. 6.

a figure of “great stature” such as Octavio Paz (who purportedly “flattered” Chicanos) did not deliver the desired familial connection or legitimate Chicano studies in the mainstream cultural institutions of the Americas, it did provide a conceptual framework from which to consolidate a Chicano Studies intellectual agenda that offered a necessary (Mexican) resemblance to dominant culture’s selective tradition.<sup>16</sup> However, actually promoting this agenda and reaping whatever cultural and institutional capital that could be derived from it meant cultivating a (trans)nationalist<sup>17</sup> affiliation to Octavio Paz that could link him to Chicanos/as and the Chicano/a Movement.

José Armas achieves this type of a connection by activating a series of imaginary disidentifications that were widely popularized within Chicano nationalist movement discourses. After introducing Octavio Paz as a leading Latin American spokesman and informing the readers of this non-profit bilingual forum (*De Colores*) that *The Labyrinth of Solitude* is widely read in Chicano Studies courses and is considered to be a “modern classic of critical interpretation by the establishment literary community,” José Armas provides an impressive list of Paz’s “Chicano” credentials:

his residence in the U.S; organic connection to binational traditions; popularity among Chicanos; and role as the intellectual precursor who purportedly “wrote about Raza in this country before they were writing about themselves.”

While the ethnographic dimensions of his travel narrative reveal that this ‘Chicanoization’ of Paz is largely a product of Armas wishful thinking, Armas nonetheless seals a Chicano connection to Paz at the symbolic level by drawing from another popular nationalist strategy: he boldly *declares* that”. . . Paz represents our roots, our cultural base and history *as a people*”<sup>18</sup> In this way Armas proposes a fusion between Chicanos, Paz, and Mexicans that conceals geopolitical, cultural, and institutional roadblocks, the presence of competing social and intellectual identities on both sides of the border; the monumental effects of 1848; and the differences between Chicano movement and mainstream intellectuals. If this were not enough, he delivers the necessary “political” connection with Paz with his own grito de independencia intelectual that appears to be lifted straight out of El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán:

We [Chicanos and Mexicanos] are the same people. We are the northern region of a nation of 400 million MESTIZOS; the bronze nation. We are hermanos in blood, culture and language.

These imaginary disidentifications move an appropriated Octavio Paz from a “Mexican he” to a “Chicano we,” from México into Aztlán, from a high brow tradition into the throes of a Chicano nationalist discourse. In the process, Paz is enjoined to Chicanos via a political narrative and he and his Labyrinth are enlisted in the local struggles against Anglo encroachment.<sup>19</sup> At the symbolic-ideological level, Octavio Paz is thus converted into a revolutionary Mexican icon, occupying a

16 I am referring this to a patriarchal, class based connection.

17 I put the “trans” before nationalist in order to reinforce the idea that Chicano nationalist formations do move across the geopolitical, social, and textual borders.

18 Annas, p. 6. Italics are mine.

19 This “conversion” of Octavio Paz is not surprising since within early nationalist epistemologies it is the Mexican who marks the opposition to the Anglo. This representation of Chicanos and Mexicanos suggests that Mexicans are “all the same among themselves” and that they are “all different from the Anglo.”

place within the pantheon along with Pancho Villa, Che Guevara, and Emiliano Zapata.<sup>20</sup>

Armas appeal to this type of Mexican Similarity does provide an imaginary (trans)nationalist connection to Paz but it does not achieve the complete erasure of all Chicano-Mexicano differences. A number of differences appear through the back door of this narrative that struggles with multiple separations; that recognizes that the conquest produced an eclipse in the consciousness of la Raza; that distinguishes itself within a travel narrative that reaffirms not only geopolitical but also conceptual differences,<sup>21</sup> and that privileges Chicano identities and dynamics while editing Mexicans and subsuming them into a homogenized variant of Chicano: Chicano=Mexicano.

The Differences that enter through the front door and are openly celebrated by José Armas are those Differences that reposition Chicanos=Mexicanos within a U.S. context in relation to other groups, that put form and structure into the (trans)nationalist definition of the race, and that are traced directly to Octavio Paz who receives acknowledgment for providing Chicanos with a necessary “intellectual” “frame work” from which to determine for themselves “what were some of the things that made the Chicano a Chicano and *different* from the Anglo, the Black and other peoples.”<sup>22</sup>

Though rudimentary and formulaic and overwritten with essentialism, this nationalist conceptualization of Chicano identity as a relational Difference is itself a theoretical expression because it provides a group of general propositions, a proposed mode of explanation, and a conjectural response<sup>23</sup> —a path for conceptualizing Chicano within political and intellectual discourse. In addition, this theoretical expression is a blended one because it incorporates elements from Paz’s cultural theory as well as elements from Chicano nationalist epistemologies. Finally, this path incorporates the desired patriarchal lineage: here the son emerges as the native theorist/pensador. He draws on the intellectual insights of his father but assumes the charge of determining for himself some of the things that make the Chicano a Chicano and the charge of projecting his own legacy. The question is: what is this early Chicano=Mexicano path to identity? (How does it frame Chicano Difference within discourse? How does it differentiate Chicanas/os? How does it incorporate *The Labyrinth of Solitude* as a vehicle for masculine introspection and political affirmation? How does it incorporate or disengage local ethnoscapas? struggles? women?)

### **III. The Theoretical Legacy, Writing Chicano: Long Live His (Essential) Chicano=Mexicano Difference!**

Although there is the tendency to undermine the complexity of nationalist epistemologies, it is clear that in the case of Armas formulaic notion of identity arriving at the essence of the Chicano double (some of the things that make the Chicano

20 This is a symbolic reconstruction of the cultural imaginary of nationalism. These particular icons are not named in the text.

21 José Armas incorporates a number of critiques of *The Labyrinth of Solitude* that center on its representation of the pachuco and mythic dimensions. However, like many of his predecessors, he forgives Paz. See, Armas 7 y 8.

22 Emphasis mine. Armas, p. 6.

23 I drew from *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, College Edition* (New York: 1968: 1362), for this explanation.

a Chicano) is a fairly complicated matter;

it means not only answering the question “Who am I” but also the question “Who are We.” As Armando Rendon elaborates in *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) in reference to Chicano identity, “to pose the dilemma of self identity from this nationalist epistemology is to pose “not merely a dilemma of self-identity but, of self-in-group identity.”<sup>24</sup> This implies not only attending to a Chicano group identity (men and women) but to other multiethnic, multiracial, and multicultural contexts and to a suggestion of competing political and intellectual traditions.

In the case of Armas construction of Chicano, this type of reckoning ultimately means determining some of the things that make the Chicano himself and no other; it involves a highly problematic doubling that suggests that all peoples of color are similar to the Anglo but different from the Chicano. This construction of Chicano identity robs other people of color of their social and political agency as well as of their “differences,” and it threatens to submerge them into the dreaded melting-pot. In addition, this notion of identity promotes the kind of separatist logic that is apparent in this passage from *Chicano Manifesto* without marking these particular racial negations:

The Chicano to state the obvious, is in essence himself and no other. He is not a Negro and cannot be like a Negro. He is not an Indian in the way native tribesman are in the United States. He is not an Anglo even when he resembles the Anglo in coloring and speech. Thus he should not and cannot act like the black, the red, or the white man, nor does he view his condition in the same way that they do.”<sup>25</sup>

Armas’s conceptualization of Chicano as a relational Difference severs the dynamic relations between Chicanas/os and other ethnic groups, suppresses the internal differences between Chicanas/os, and assumes that we Chicanas/os are all identical to Him. Here masculinity is the invisible universal norm. Because of its dominance, this masculinity does not have to name the other brown gender in order to constitute itself as a discourse;

it can draw on a patriarchal legacy which is self-legitimizing and self-affirming, a tradition of male intellectuality—the (male-authored) Mexican essay—which incorporates a male prerogative to define thought,<sup>26</sup> and on a widely disseminated nationalist epistemology that suggests that “to be a Chicano is a new way of *knowing your* brown brother and understanding our brown race.”<sup>27</sup> In retrospect, it is clear

24 Rendon also provides an important insight into the role of early pensadores in promoting these essentialist constructions upon suggesting that: “Perhaps the answer to developing a total Mexican American concept must be left in the hands of the artist, the painter, the writer and the poet who can abstract the essence of what it is to be a Mexican in America.” See *Chicano Manifesto*, p. 324. Originally quoted in *Chicano Manifesto* from “The Other Mexican American”, March, 1966.

25 While Rendon admits that Chicanos “owe a great debt to the black people of America for striking out against oppression, he also proposes that “if it were not for color there would be little to distinguish black from white”. If this were not enough he identifies us with his perspective: “We Chicanos see the Negro as a black Anglo,” Suffice it to say that this line of thinking is very offensive and that he does not speak for everyone. Rendon’s representation of the black anglo bears a striking resemblance to the Chicana malinche who also figures in this work. For more on his construction of ethnic groups, see *Chicano Manifesto*, pp. 1-4.

26 For this discussion I am drawing from Mary Pratt’s essay, “Don’t Interrupt Me”, *The Gender Essay as Conversation and Countercanon*. In Dorris Meyer (ed.), *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995): 10-26. The final section of my essay incorporates Chicanas into the countercanon through Pratt’s recovery of Victoria Ocampo’s Testimonio. For more on this recovery, see Pratt, p. 13.

27 Emphasis mine. Rendon, p. 320.



that the proposed theoretical construction of the Chicano as an “enormous” (race-based, gendered) “totalization” is itself an impossibility given that Chicana/o is complexly constructed—it is constructed within a range of other multicultural and multiracial categories, with class and gender, and sexuality, and with the theoretical insights of competing political and intellectual legacies.<sup>28</sup>

Armas notion of Chicano identity as an “internal conversion” also suffers from the limitations identified with respect to essayistic representations of Mexican national culture: it promotes a culturalist, idealist and subjectivist notion of history and reduces history to cultural practices and existential psychodrama.<sup>29</sup> Affirming social and political identities through these traditions often boils down to enumerating or synthesizing “unique” character traits, cultural practices or profiles; creating larger than life mythic prototypes; delivering a unitary image of political struggle, national culture, and identity. In the most popular variants, individual reassessments of Chicano personalities lead to the unanimous conviction that all Chicanas/os have traveled the same paths, experienced much of the same indignities, rebelled in much the same ways, *simply because they are Chicanos*.<sup>30</sup>

In reference to a Mexican context Claudio Lomnitz-Adler (1992) has pointed out that “the works of the Mexican pensadores rarely provoke empirical research”; that these works are “synthesis meant to be consumed in particular political conjunctures”; and that within these works “knowledge created is knowledge politically used, exploited and (eventually) discarded into a pool of reusable symbols.”<sup>31</sup> To some extent his critique is valid within U.S. context because these essentialist constructions of Chicano identity and the revolt have generated an arsenal of reusable political symbols while allowing for little accumulation of knowledge of the diverse social identities which intersect with Chicanas/os and help to reconstitute them within the social formation and within discourse. However there are different political dimensions attached to the Mexican production of *lo mexicano* and the Chicano production of *lo chicano=mexicano*.

For instance, Roger Bartra (1987) identifies cultural representations of *lo mexicano* with those dominant forms of subjectivity that are circulated within a Mexican hegemonic political culture in the post-revolutionary period.<sup>32</sup> Within a U.S. context these dimensions of the narrative of *lo mexicano* are ignored—the theorists of *lo chicano* often assumed that texts such as *The Labyrinth of Solitude* delivered an authentic representation of the Mexicano (the Mexican, Mexican-ness) although they took issue with its representation of the pachuco.<sup>33</sup> In con-

28 For this critique I have drawn from Ruth Frankenberg’s discussion of social identity in *The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 23-38.

29 I have incorporated some elements of Claudio Lomnitz-Adler’s critique. See, *Exit From The Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in The Mexican National Space* (Berkeley; University of California, 1992): 2.

30 I am rephrasing Rendon, p. 113, to suit the purposes of my discussion.

31 *Exit from The Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley: University of California: 1992): 9. Lomnitz Adler also explains that “[t]he “tradition” consists more in posing an identity problem than of an increasingly precise theory of the ways in which a cultural and historical dialectic has played out into Mexico’s present.”

32 Roger Bartra. *La jaula de la melancolía*. (México: Grijalbo, 1987), See pp. 1-7.

33 I do not mean to homogenize Chicano revisions of *The Labyrinth* but to point to general trends that were apparent in culturalist existentialist perspectives that interfaced with Chicano nationalism. An example which addresses the point at hand can be found in Eliu Carranza’s *Pensamientos*. He quotes extensively

trast to contemporary critics of Mexican nationalism who have linked these forms of subjectivity with “una voluntad de poder nacionalista ligada a la unificación e institucionalización del Estado capitalista moderno,”<sup>34</sup> these pensadores “chicanos” (who dreamed with the idea of a different Chicano nation) framed *The Labyrinth of Solitude* in response to national dynamics on this side of the international border such as colonization, racism, and social and cultural dispossession. These pensadores were also responding to other social movements in the U.S., especially to the towering presence of African Americans in struggles for civil rights, and to the social and political demands of women and other marginalized groups.<sup>35</sup>

In this sense it is of supreme importance that Armas himself prefaces his formulaic discussion of a Chicano ethnic distinction by alerting his readers that “the movement of the Chicano in the 1960’s” searched to articulate and to identify Chicanismo and that “[f]or a long time (and even today in many places) the activist, the vocal Chicano, identified his struggle as the same as the Black man in this country.”<sup>36</sup> While Armas admits that some of the causes of “their oppressed and colonized condition” are the same, he nonetheless marks their distinction upon highlighting “subtle, yet *definite* differences” that “began to take Blacks and Chicanos” by different paths in route to cultural, political and economic liberation.

It is *The Labyrinth of Solitude* that provides Armas with a necessary conceptual springboard for jumping from what he constructs as an artificial Chicano Black similarity to an essential Chicano Black difference, (within his particular nationalist epistemology this is tantamount to a Chicano double). For Armas *The Labyrinth of Solitude* complies with this function because it provides Chicanos with *intellectual* “insights into the makeup” of the Mexicano that are relevant for the Chicano, including his “familiar traits” and “the existential nature of la Raza.”<sup>37</sup> Here *The Labyrinth of Solitude* functions as a substitute for a socially grounded analysis of Chicana/o Mexicana/o relations and subjectivities—it is the “artificial entelechy” that Bartra refers to within another context which “exists” primarily in the books and discourses of those who describe and exalt it.<sup>38</sup>

While Armas particular appropriation of *The Labyrinth of Solitude* duplicates many of the limitations of Mexican character studies reviewed earlier, the introduction of this essay at this point in Armas biography/travel narrative is important because it is this constructed Mexican identity that symbolically disengages Chicanos from the

from *The Labyrinth of Solitude* and punctuates Paz’s text in this way: “Such a view may have been or may be true of the Mexican, but it is no longer true of the Chicano....For the Chicano has shown his face at last! He has shed the “servant mentality” and denied the validity of the “psychology of the master”. He no longer shuts himself away from the stranger nor does he seek to disguise himself...,” pp. 8-10. From another perspective Porath rejected an easy Faz Chicano identification upon suggesting that “[n]ot only is he (Paz) Mexican, he is highly sophisticated, world traveled, and successful.” However, he continues: “We might question the suggestion that his conclusions have anything to do with the Chicano, or even parallel Chicano thought. Yet, Paz- is a shrewd observer, and he is very cognizant of Anglo character and how it differs from Mexican character....It is interesting that what Paz notes as primary differences between the Mexican and the Anglo character are similar differences to those underscored by students of the Mexican American...” De Colores, p. 25.

34 Bartra, p. 17.

35 This is particularly true in the case of Armas and Rendón.

36 Armas, p. 5.

37 Armas not only highlights these Mexican (raits but also suggests that Chicanos “identify” with them.

38 Translation mine, p. 17.

struggles of other people (and women) of color. Thus *The Labyrinth of Solitude* offers the desired form of political exceptionalism; it symbolically articulates the singular Chicano= Mexican / White Difference that is so prevalent within nationalist epistemologies.

This is the Difference that reverses the terms of the white non-white binary, identifies and polarizes the two major forces of racial and political contention, and articulates the other (Chicano=Mexicano) national question at the level of cultural political representation. Through its projected reconfiguration of a national identities, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* itself is associated with an essential Chicano=Mexicano resemblance.<sup>39</sup>

In and of itself Armas's introduction does not offer the type of pseudo-scientific ethnographic support for this type of Mexican resemblance that is often featured in the literature of *lo mexicano*. While he breaks with his Mexican forefathers on this count, this type of ethnographic support is supplied in the interview (which features another appropriation of Paz that may or may not correspond to what was actually voiced in the exchange between Paz and Armas). Within this interview Armas assumes ethnographic authority: he organizes the interview, serves as the authenticating voice, incorporates an unruly form of Chicanol, and uses the opportunity to ask Paz to elaborate on the differences between Mexicans, Anglos and Chicanos. After multiple setbacks, Paz graciously accepts the invitation to elaborate.

#### IV. The Interview With Octavio Paz<sup>40</sup>

##### Rotating Essential Chicano=Mexicano Differences and Speaking in the Name of the Familia

In contrast to what occurs with the pachuco in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, in this interview Octavio Paz identifies Chicanos on the basis of a number of relational differences that assign to the Chicano a much desired positive Mexican resemblance. Paz rejects the assimilationist framework that mediates his vision of the pachuco as a pocho in this famous essay, and he qualifies any identification of the Chicano with the Anglo as a stupid form of ignorance. If this were not enough, he reaffirms difference as a highly prized form and structure for speaking Chicano upon suggesting to Armas that the Chicano is not only different but very different. In addition, Octavio Paz finally satisfies Armas nationalist appetite for ethnic and national difference by affirming that there is more likeness between a Chicano and a Mexican than between a Chicano and an Anglo-American.

It is within this context that an essential Mexican resemblance surfaces as Paz elaborates on the survival of Mexican culture —especially the Spanish language- in the United States. Paz explains that what enables this linguistic survival is the familia and not just any familia: a familia that upholds “la moral tradicional mexicana.” This morality is described being so uniquely Mexican that it conserves “certain values” which aren't even apparent in Mexico City.”<sup>41</sup> Here Paz espouses a “Mexican” rendition of familism that finds its comple-

39 This is the flipside of the Chicano Anglo difference.

40 José Armas and Octavio Paz discuss a number of social, political and cultural dynamics that I have not incorporated here. All of the statements made by Paz and Armas are cited from the interview, which is a “construction” of their discursive exchanges and social identities. I am drawing from Judith Stacey's important work in the subtitle of this section. See note 43.

41 Translation, Interview, pp. 12 y 13

ment in a local nationalist ideology on this side of the international border once Armas jumps on the family values bandwagon and links Paz directly to his own communitarian interpretation of familial-ism. Armas seizes the moment and intervenes in this way:

This is the concept that we want to advance. The concept of the family and the values that can be found in the family have maintained us while we live in an Anglo American society.<sup>42</sup>

Armas enlists the traditional patriarchal heterosexual family in the struggle against further Anglo encroachment without confronting the disturbing contradiction that historically stable marriage systems of this nature have rested upon coercion and upon inequality, without redressing marital inequality, and without taking into account the fact that women bear disproportionate responsibility for their children.<sup>43</sup> In addition to the fact that this “political” construction of the family leaves gender roles and economic divisions intact and reinscribes compulsory forms of heterosexuality, this construction also sidesteps larger social conditions in its formulation of domination and resistance to domination.<sup>44</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that Armas’ communitarian talk about the family and family values was itself being widely disputed within a Chicana discourse at the time in which he published his interview, Armas makes no mention of this fact. Instead, he broaches the question of women’s liberation with Octavio Paz in this way: “And speaking of this aspect, (the traditional family) what do you think of women’s lib?”<sup>45</sup>

This is a loaded question given the fact that it comes after Armas explains to Paz that Anglo society is in a state of decomposition (we can suppose this is due primarily to a lack of strong Christian family values provoked by the sixties counter cultural revolt) and after he has already argued in favor of political familism. Although Paz acknowledges that the family itself has come under fire, he does not initially endorse Annas’ position. However, Armas links Paz with his negative view of women’s liberation in this summary of their conversation: “We talked about the women’s liberation movement being an extension to the white man’s tentacles.”<sup>46</sup>

We don’t read this exchange in the transcription of the interview, there is enough in Paz’s commentary on the family to suggest that women’s liberation is not at

42 Translation, original reads: “Éste es un concepto que queremos avanzar nosotros. El concepto de la familia y los valores que se encuentran en la familia nos han mantenido mientras que vivimos en una sociedad anglo americana,” p. 13. Aída Hurtado’s comments are instructive here; she points out that; “La familia, which is patriarchal in nature, is considered a support group...a catalyst for political migration.” See: *The Color of Privilege* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996): 75.

43 I am drawing from Judith Stacey’s critique of the supposedly voluntary companionate nature of the traditional nuclear family. See *In the Name of the Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996): 68-72.

44 Judith Stacey’s contemporary critique of familism is instructive on this point- She proposes that “[d]espite the collectivist aspirations of communitarian ideology, the political effects of identifying family breakdown as the crucible of all social crises that have accompanied postindustrialization and the globalization of capitalism are privatistic and profoundly conservative,” p. 74.

45 Translation mine. Original reads: “Y hablando de este aspecto, como ve Usted el movimiento femenino que se conoce aqui como El “Women’s Lib?””

46 Armas, p. 10. When Armas asks Paz about Women’s Lib, Paz answers: ‘Bueno, yo creo que depende del contexto. A mi me parecía positivo en general.’ See p. 14. However, he also states: “En este siglo se habla mucho de la familia como un centro de opresión. Bueno, yo creo que la familia es muy importante y que en el mundo chicano ha representado un factor positivo.” Octavio Paz, p. 13.

all desirable for Chicanos or Chicanas, In Paz's moralistic rhetoric, which tempers Chicano nationalism with a universalist discourse, it is the Chicana Mexicana who provides the essential Mexican resemblance because she is the one who is the center of family life and the one who has conserved Chicano language and traditional Mexican family values. Paz refers here to certain values that have been deposited in the family, values that have to do with good, bad, the attitude of the youth in the face of sex.<sup>47</sup> Suffice it to say that Paz's representation of the Chicana offers an uncanny resemblance to with those nationalist representations of the family — the Chicano holy (patriarchal, heterosexual, Christian) family— featured in *De Colores* in which the Chicana is cast as the super Mexican Virgin.

Armas' silence around Chicana feminism is not innocent given that it is contextualized by a social ambient in which Chicanas were defending themselves against the malinche label within Chicano political arenas that promoted the idea that defending women's issues at home and at work was tantamount to promoting an assimilationist agenda. Armas' disidentification of Chicanas Mexicanas from women's issues speaks volumes to the serious play of Difference that enables his highly problematic transnationalist vision of *lo chicano lo mexicano*. This vision erases Chicana subjects and their social differences and delivers a patriarchal construction of the Mexican family, Chicana/o identity, and the Chicana/o Mexicana/o intellectual tradition.

It is no wonder that in the graphic representations of *la familia* the Chicana Mexicana cannot meet her visual public one on one, that she is intertwined with her man, and that she blends into a familial portrait which does privilege a Chicano male spectatorship through the frontal portrait of the Chicano father. In this exchange women are symbolically "left at home" while the men construct the intellectual and social legacy—there is not a hint of the fact that Chicanas and Mexicanas travel spatially or intellectually toward a different kind of individual or self representation.<sup>48</sup> They are absented from the transnationalist monologue that constructs a Chicana/o Mexicana/o tradition—they are silenced within a discursive exchange that is punctuated with a lingering (spoken or unspoken) command that has been identified with respect to a male-centered Latin American Essay: "Do not interrupt me!"<sup>49</sup>

## V. Chale, I'll Interrupt You! Lessons in the Chicana Gender Essay

"Vale más un taco en casa Que cien platos en la ajena." "La Casada," sung in *Tejano Roots*<sup>50</sup>

Fortunately the masculine prerogative to reproduce patriarchal connectivity at the discursive and political levels did not go

47 Translation mine, Interview, p. 12.

48 I have incorporated the phrase "space travel" from Minrose Guin, "Space Travel: The Connective Politics of Feminist Reading," *Signs*, vol. 21: 4 (1996): 870-909, although I do not incorporate her perspectives as a way of defining Chicana travel. I am grateful to Inés Hernández-Ávila for sharing this citation with me and for her insights about connective politics. She shared these insights with us in a wonderful presentation, entitled "Grounding and Localizing Narratives: Native American/Chicana Connective Politics," given at the conference, "Coloring of the Humanities: (Inter)Disciplinary/Intertribal Discourses," UC Davis, May 15, 1997.

49 For more on this tradition, see Mary Pratt's recovery of Ocampo, p. 13.

50 "La Casada," sung by Las Hermanas Guerrero on *Tejano Roots: The Women: 1946-1970* Arhoolie, CD 343, 1991.

uncontested. Without asking permission and without making any apologies, Chicanas boldly interrupted the male monologue. They took to the road intellectually, politically, and sexually, exploring multiple social identities and practices, and speaking as “pensadoras” within what has been termed as the “analytical gender essay” (in the Latin American tradition) and within creative productions which theorized social dynamics.<sup>51</sup> From these locations they reimagined complex relations between Chicanas and Chicanos, Chicanas/os and Mexicanas/os, and the relations between Chicanas and Mexicanas and other people of color. While they did not speak with one voice or move through one circuit, they responded to Paz and to the Chicanos who appropriated him, both directly and indirectly.

In contrast to the majority of critics who centered their critique on scrutinizing *The Labyrinth of Solitude* for its faulty representations of pachuco males, the majority of Chicana creative writers and critics who responded to this essay tended to scrutinize its psycho-social and sexual interpretations of Mexican history;

<sup>52</sup> its masculinist heterosexist viewings of Chicana Mexicana bodies; and its failure to recognize the agency of Chicana Mexican women.

One of the most forceful responses to *The Labyrinth* was delivered by Dotti Hernández, who responded to Paz before the publication of Armas’ interview and introduction. She not only rejected the claim that Paz represents our culture and roots but also rejected the idea that his gender identity could be universally enlisted in the service of everyone’s liberation. Without any apologies, she forcefully tells us that “I came to the realization that ‘the solitude of man’ Octavio Paz is analyzing in his book’, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, is truly the solitude of Mexican male species...”<sup>53</sup>

Hernández insinuates that because Paz has not elaborated on the Mexican woman’s predicament, he cannot be considered as a role model or an intellectual precursor; that because he subjects women to a man’s reality and to the role that men give her, his patronage and traditions are oppressive and reinforce the historical legacies that configure men as earthly gods, here “*número uno*.” Hernández proposes that another Mexican intellectual tradition needs to be consolidated which analyzes women’s thoughts and doubts” about the realities to which they are subjected. But here it is also suggested that Mexican and Chicana women need to go further: they need to shed the patriarchal mask and expose their personhood and uniquely feminine epistemologies.

Hernández was not alone in forging a political contestation; from other quarters Chicana critics and cultural practitioners

51 I am incorporating Chicanas into the countercanon tradition described by Mary Pratt in reference to the Latin American essay.

52 For an early revision of Malintzin, see Adelaida del Castillo, “Malintzín Tenépal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective.” In eds. Rosaura Sánchez and Rosa Marínez Cruz, *Essays on La mujer* (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Research Center, 1977): 123-149.

53 Dotti Hernández, “*Número Uno*.” Northridge, Ca: El Popo Femenil, May, 1973. It is important to note that *De Colores* dedicated an issue to chicanas entitled: “La cosecha/The Harvest: The Chicana Experience.” 4:3 (1978). This issue carried an introduction which proposed that “there is an immediate task for La Chicana and that is the self-definition of being a woman in a new era.” *De Colores*, 3: 3 (1977), also included “*Literatura y la Mujer Chicana*” edited by Linda Morales Armas and Sue Mo. For a contemporary critique of Paz’s cultural theory, see Emma Pérez, “Speaking from the Margin; Uninvited Discourse on Sexuality and Power,” 57-74. In *Building with Our Hands*, and Norma Alarcón, “*Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism*.” In (eds) McClintock, Mufti, and Shohat, *Dangerous Liaisons* (Minneapolis:

University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 278-297.

offered analytical paradigms for understanding the triple nature of Chicana oppression. They articulated elaborate constructions of Chicana feminism and mujeres/women within a broad spectrum of social, sexual, political and intellectual practices.<sup>54</sup> They delivered poetic representations that proposed that the women of the race needed to “SHOUT OUT” their social conditions and celebrate the explosive potential of “ideas” which “overtake” lives, “reach minds” and “open eyes.”<sup>55</sup> They authored artistic representations that displaced a notably artificial statuesque heterosexist portrait of the Chicana Mexicana Virgin and re-imaged the Guadalupe for contemporary mujeres seeking liberation from oppressive male-oriented images of Chicana women and transnational brown and white patriarchal alliances.<sup>56</sup> They militated against the colonial legacy of the Spanish language, which wrote the collective in the masculine form (chicano/mexicano), and against the colonial legacy of English which coupled “you” (la chicana) to compulsory heterosexuality.<sup>57</sup>

They drew on theatrical devices to “re-introduce” the Mexican women (deleted from the official histories of Chicanos/Mexicanos) within alternative representations in which Chicanas came knocking at the door with Mexicana historical figures “to be part of the insurrection.”<sup>58</sup> They formed colectivas—such as *Mujeres en Marcha*—which addressed the issues of gender inequality that were “unsettled” and which “challenged the notion that there is no room for a Chicana movement within our own community.”<sup>59</sup>

## VI. Exiting the Labyrinth: Critical Reflections on the Future<sup>60</sup>

If we are to properly scrutinize the transnationalist movement that moves Chicanos out of the labyrinth into a local race-based patri-

54 For more on this Chicana Feminism, see Alma García, “The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse; 1970-1980.” In (eds) Ellen Carol Dubois and Vicki L. Ruiz *Unequal Sisters* (Routledge: London, 1990): 418-431; Norma Alarcón, “The Theoretical Subject of this Bridge Called My Back and Anglo American Feminism,” and Sonía Saldívar Hull, “Feminism on the Border: From Gender Politics to Geopolitics,” both in (eds) Héctor Calderón and José David Saldívar, *Criticism in the Borderlands* (Durham: Duke, 1991); 29-42 and 189-202 respectively.

55 See Dorinda Moreno, “Mujer de la Raza,” in *La Mujer es la tierra/La tierra da vida* (Berkeley: Casa Editorial, 1975): 27.

56 I am referring here to the Guadalupe revisions of Yolanda López and Ester Hernández. For more on these Chicana artistic productions as well as other Chicana poetic and political endeavors of the seventies and eighties, see my essays: “I throw punches for my Race, but I don’t Want to Be a Man,” in (eds) L. Grossberg, C. Nelson and P. Treichler, *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 81-95, and “...And, yes the Earth Did Part,” in (eds) L. De La Torre and B. Pesquera, *Building With Our Hands* (University of California Press, 1993): 34-56. For an all important example of feminist contestations of the eighties, see: (eds) Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983) and Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years, lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

57 See Veronica Cunningham “ever since” (1976, original, in *Capirotada*, Los Angeles), reprinted in (eds.) Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero, *Infinite Divisions* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993): 101.

58 See Lydia Camarillo, “Mi Reflejo” (1980, original, *La Palabra*), reprinted in *Infinite Divisions*, pp. 268-271.

59 See “Mujeres en marcha,” Teresa Córdova and Gloria Cuadras, Preface, *Unsettled Issues* (Berkeley: Chicano Studies Library Publications, 1983): 1-2.

60 While I propose to exit the labyrinth in a different way that Lomnitz Adler proposes to exit, I would like to acknowledge the importance of his work in contributing to the semantic path of my symbolic departure. I would also like to recognize the works of Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, Inés Hernández-Ávila, and Ella Shohat which reference transnational and global coalitions between “radical” women and people of color.

archal heterosexist discourse featuring lo chicano=mexicano, we need to recover the broad range of critical responses that move us from an affirmative monologue to a critical dialogue with these essentialist constructions. We need to offer a more sustained analyses of the larger social and political currents and positionings that enabled this particular intersection of lo chicano/mexicano as well as other more contemporary renditions that continue to make their way into our living rooms via the political discourses of Mexicans on both sides of the border.

In this essay I have illuminated the far-reaching effects of transnationalist epistemologies by guiding my reader through the types of national, gender, and ethnic and intellectual exclusions that accompanied the movement ‘out of the labyrinth into the race.’ It is important to “connect these exclusions” and to reinforce the idea that they implicate not only Chicanas and Mexicanas but also other women and people of color. I would be remiss if I didn’t also address the fact that many times unearthing the foundational texts associated to the area studies in which we work and struggle means encountering a number of disturbing contradictions—the fact that those who sought to cultivate “alternative geopolitical and intellectual relations” often wrote new stories into old frameworks, traded revolutionary (political) identities for mainstream (intellectual) ones, and reproduced hegemonic forms of travel which are profoundly disturbing. However, the fact that transnationalist constructions of identity and intellectual work are profoundly disturbing to many of us should not prevent us from re-encountering their “forbidden” languages of difference or from re-imagining other forms of travel that do not exclude this way. At the very least this type of critical reflection on the movements of the past can provide us with an indication of how far many of our predecessors traveled in opposing these frameworks and how far we must continue to travel as we attempt to practice a critical transnationalism that “connects” the progressive social movements of Chicanas, Mexicanas, women of color, Chicanas/os and Mexicanas/os, and other people of color against oppression, exploitation and against the lack access to social institutions as well as social, cultural, and economic resources. If we are to exit the labyrinth we need to form new intellectual and social partnerships and we need to re-engage liberatory theories of social intersection that move us through other social, political, economic, sexual, and geographical landscapes toward substantive social —not just discursive— change.<sup>61</sup> We need to militate against the theoretical signposts of dominant culture that continue to read, “No Mexicans allowed,” “No Chicanas Mexicanas Here,” “No People of Color Here,” “No Unconventional Families Here,” “No difference Here,” and to steer clear of the transnationalist bandwagon —and its dynamic of patriarchal connectivity— even though it is much in vogue these days, notwithstanding the fact that it is dated.

Finally, we need to stop celebrating transnationalism just because it crosses borders. Celebrating transnationalist frameworks simply because they are Mexican or because they are mobile often encourages people to leave their critical arsenals at home, as if the complex social arenas only exist on this side and not on that side, and as if we could will away the manner in which race, class, gender and

61 I am responding to some of Teresa Ebert’s concerns in “Ludic Feminism, the Body, Performance and Labor: Bringing Materialism Hack into Feminist Cultural Studies,” *Cultural Critique* 23 (1993): 5-50.



sexuality intersect with one another within transnational global capitalism. This environment suggests that we cannot go at intellectual work alone, that we have to develop new global networks if we are to produce a form of critical cultural studies that truly crosses social, international and state sanctioned borders.<sup>62</sup>

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62 This type of analysis cannot make 'caso omiso' of those women who labor in homesites, factories, hospitals, fields, educational and socio political institutions. Their bodies have been targeted and retargeted by Proposition 187, and The California Civil(?) Rights Initiative. Unfortunately, Chicanas Mexicanas also have been targeted within critical discourses that reference Chicano Studies within contemporary works and reinscribe; the ghosts of the past by suggesting that "[r]adical Chicana and lesbian scholars" have moved away from the community." See Ignacio García, "Juncture in the Road: Chicano Studies Since "El Plan de Santa Barbara," in (eds) David Maciel and Isidro Ortíz, *Chicanas Chicanos at the Crossroads*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996): 191. However, "[t]here's no going back" to race based familial constructions of Chicano studies that promise to take us to a new cross roads while failing to register the tactical revisions registered by Cynthia Orozco en "El Plan de Santa Barbara" and by other mujeres who put gender hack into class and race and sexuality and take note of the fact that systems of oppression also promote hegemonic notions of masculinity and patriarchal forms of power.

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