

**LATINIDAD IN ENSTRANGED LANDS: NARRATIVE INTERJECTIONS IN
CHICANX AND LATINX LITERATURE, FILM, AND TELEVISION**

By

Samuel Saldívar III

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ABSTRACT

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In the closing lines of the 2000 work *Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* author Chon Noriega asks his readers, “how do you participate in this world of knowledge and power as something other than a viewer?” (201). Quite honestly, Noriega’s question is one of many that has driven the direction and purpose of my research and scholarship at large. My dissertation, *Latinidad in Enstranged Lands: Narrative Interjections in Chicanx and Latinx Literature, Film, and Television* has sought to reflect, via narrative, my participations with and complications of knowledge and power within a dominant Anglo American U.S.

Consequently, my dissertation has placed a primary emphasis on the constructions, presentations, and representations of Chicanx and Latinx fictional works of narrative that while including fictional works of literature like Corky Gonzales’s *Yo Soy Joaquin* have also incorporated often identified “alternative” works like comics and graphic novels that also explore the issues of knowledge and power in relation to Chicanxs and Latinxs in the Americas. What I have kept at the center of my analysis, however, has been Chicanxs and Latinxs. Along with Noriega’s question of participation and action as they relate to these particular populations a secondary but equally significant question that asks “what’s new in Chicano/Latino Studies?” or “What has been made new in Chicano/Latino Studies?” has driven my directional explorations of the various narrative forms I have incorporated into my dissertation.

To accomplish these goals I turn to Narrative Theory studies which offers a way to broach the various narrative mediums that my dissertation explores. This dissertation explores the

specific term *Ostranit* coined by Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky in his 1917 publication *Art as Device*, and which was translated by Benjamin Sher in 1991 as enstrangement. Although my dissertation has outlined the complicated and rather expansive relationship Scholars like David Herman, and Darko Suvin have had with Shklovsky's term, my dissertation positions enstrangement as those moments in literature that are made new for readers who are made or are invited to pause and dwell on a particular literary moment or element of the text they are reading. This particular narrative moment for Shklovsky "is when the literary work attains its greatest and most long-lasting impact" (12). The exploration of narrative enstrangement in Chicanx/Latinx narratives is further established by Frederick L. Aldama, who, in *A Users Guide to Postcolonial and Latino Borderland Fiction*, identifies enstrangement as one of the many narrative elements that an author can use "to push at the boundaries of convention, to deviate unpredictably from aesthetic norms" and wake readers up from a "state of habituation" (36). This means that as we engage Chicanx/Latinx narrative works, the decisions made by authors and directors to use, for example, bilinguality, structure phenotype, and indigenous elements attempt to estrange, or make new our engagements of Chicanxs and Latinxs while also breaking away from stereotypical dominant American representations of Chicanxs and Latinxs that have been historically perpetuated dominant American narratives. And while scholars like Lemon and Reis understand enstrangement "not so much a device as a result obtainable by an number of devices" (5 Lemon & Reis), enstrangement is nevertheless a significant narrative tool that can invite readers and scholars to engage Chicanx and Latinx works in new and exiting ways. Thus, my work complicates the role of narrative formation in Chicanx/Latinx fictional literatures, films, and televisions by placing close attention to specific moments that make new our engagements of Chicanx/Latinx narratives and introduce an Enstranged Latinidad.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the loved ones I have lost while completing this PhD.

Samuel Saldivar I

You are my own version of John Wayne.

Mario Garcia

Thank you for all the stories you shared with me around the barbeque pit.

To Our Angel

I catch glimpses of your beauty in your mother's smile.

Gerardo Garcia

Your smile lights up my heart every time I think of you.

Maximillian Monroy-Miller

Thank you for reminding me to live and love with all of my heart every single day

Tomasita Vasquez

Ama, gracias por sus oraciones, tu apoyo, tu inteligencia, y tu amor. Te extraño mucho, y fuiste un gran ejemplo del amor y poder de nuestro Padre Eterno. Te amo.

Samuel Saldivar Jr.

Daddy, I miss you so much it hurts.

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INTRODUCTION

Enstranged Latinolandia: Narrative Interjections in Chicano/Latino Literature, Film, and Television

As the fastest growing minority group in the United States-, Latinx populations are shaping the broader American sociocultural and academic landscapes. More and more, Chicanx and Latinx have become key topics of political and social analysis as majoritarian America struggles to understand the complex, dynamic makeup of this diverse population of the Americas and their relation to the broader U.S. Conversations surrounding immigration, immigration reform, deportation practices, ethnic studies programs, their banishment across the U.S., and access to higher education (to name but a few) have, in the last few years, dominated news headlines, social media outlets, and even political national conventions. Everyone this side of the Rio Bravo seems to have an opinion about Latinx groups in the United States; an opinion that has been shaped by a consistent, perpetual narrative of Chicanxs and Latinxs within the United States. Unfortunately, many of these narratives attempt to erase the struggles that have befallen Chicanx/Latinx populations over time in the U.S. “Most Whites”, for example, “believe that if...minorities” like Chicanxs and Latinxs “would just stop thinking about the past, work hard, and complain less (particularly about racial discrimination), then Americans of all hues could “all get along”” (Bonilla-Silva 1). What such conversations highlight, for us, however, is that while White America struggles to maintain its presence in the U.S., “we Latinos/as, with our massive and ever growing presence in the United States, are creating a new world, a new culture” (*Latino/a Literature* Aldama xii) that is reshaping historically white American concepts of Latinidad. Yes, our artists, creators, authors—storytellers—are transforming the U.S. American landscape and they are doing this through popular cultural mediums such as literary fiction, film and television. This dissertation explores how Latinx experiences and identities are

distilled and reconstructed in a variety of cultural phenomena. Throughout this work I also explore the storytelling devices used in each of the different media—literature, television, and film—to enrich our understanding of how these new worlds are built and how they transform (for better or worse) their readers and viewers sense of self in the world. In this dissertation I focus on Latinx literary fictional, filmic, and televisual narrative production from the early 1960s into the 21st century. Moreover, although the social and cultural production of Chicanx and Latinx populations have exponentially increased due to the growth of social mediums like Youtube, Twitter, etc., mistreatments, omissions, and stereotypic representations of Chicanx and Latinx narratives have persisted well into the 21st century and highlight a consistent U.S. social/cultural failure of understanding and social progress.

The close attention to Chicanx and Latinx population groups within the U.S., and the use of narrative theory practices understandably requires a clear definition of the terms. While I am aware that defining ethnic/cultural population groups like “Chicanxs” and “Latinxs” is, for the most part, unique to the U.S., I offer my conceptualizations of Chicanxs and Latinxs for the sake of clarity throughout this dissertation. Thus, I define “Chicanx” as a person of Mexican and/or Mexican-American ethnicity and descent who is conscious of their history of oppression, invisibility within the U.S., and who engages social and political institutions that continue to oppress Mexican and/or Mexican-American populations. “Chicanx” is a historically conscious *and* presently active political identity within the U.S. Likewise, “Latinx” is an identity with origins in the Spanish-speaking countries of, but not limited to, United States, Mexico, Central and South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. And although countries like Spain and Equatorial Guinea are also identified as Spanish-speaking countries, the Latino identified locations are “united by a common heritage” with the United States. Moreover, the use

of the letter x attempts to destabilize identifications and or associations of gender scripts. “Chicanx” and “Latinx” are part of a larger, ongoing conversation among Chicanx/Latinx authors and scholars. Cherrie L. Moraga, Juan Gonzalez, and Harold Augenbraum and Margaret Fernández Olmos for example, present definitions that underscore the complex history Chicanxs and Latinxs share. Moraga emphasizes an indigenous *Xicana* and *Xicano* identity whereby the x acknowledges the “Nahuatl- spelling of the “ch” sound” (xxi). For Gonzalez, ‘Chicano’ and ‘Mexican-American’ are synonymous and refer to Mexicans who have been born and raised in the U.S. Likewise, Augenbraum, and Fernandez Olmos describe “Latino” as a “useful, if still unsatisfactory, label, as it is based more on neutrality,” as opposed to the term Hispanic, “which is associated with Spain” (xii).

As a historical frame, the early 1960s was not chosen as a haphazard starting point. The 1960s was a time that saw increased visibility of Chicanxs across the U.S. in social, artistic and academic spaces. Rudy Acuña, for example, concedes that when exploring notions of a Chicanx socio-cultural impetus “the Decade of the Sixties is hugely important” for reasons including Chicanxs being “integrated into the political life of the (American) nation” at faster rates than previous years, and Chicanxs were also reaching “a critical mass in numbers, and...could no longer be ignored” (Acuña 286). Artistically, the 60s marked a period where “[M]uch of Chicano popular music, radio, newspapers, and literature reflected the deep discontent” (Tatum xxii) that many Chicanxs were experiencing throughout the U.S. The popular cultural discontents that poets like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales- and Abelardo “Lalo” Delgado- were expressing in social spaces were also being explored in academic locales by Chicanx scholars who struggled to rewrite Chicanxs into the academy. In her retrospective work *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* Maylei Blackwell contends that while Chicanas

were struggling with chauvinistic, oppressive, Chicano patriarchy, they nevertheless “contested how cultural icons-la Malinche, la Virgen, la Adelita” were being misappropriated by Chicano males and Anglos while at the same time “authorized an autonomous female political agency” (101).

I use H. Porter Abbott’s definition of narrative from *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Abbott defines narrative in its basic form as “*the representation of an event or a series of events*” (emphasis original 13) that isn’t “restricted to literature, film, and theater, but is formed in all activities that involve the representation of events in time” (xii). Likewise, a narrative is made of two parts, which are identified as “the story and the narrative discourse” (Abbott 238). To be clear, I am primarily concerned with both narrative discourse which Abbott defines as “the story as rendered in a particular narrative” (238), and story which is defined as “a chronological sequence of events involving entities” (241). Understanding that narrative is both a particular, focused telling of events that occur in sequence that are conveyed through entities like, for example, Chicanxs/Latinxs, I will excavate Chicanx/Latinx cultural production in Chicanx/Latinx fictional, filmic, and televisual narratives from the Chicanx movement period of the early 1960s into the 21st century. Before attending to the representations of Chicanx/Latinx cultural productions in literary fiction, film, and television, however, my analysis warrants further explication regarding how narratives can be identified.

Latinx and Chicanx narrative production exists in time and place. For this reason, one can’t just analyze the narratives in isolation from history and region—and sociopolitical climate. In this sense, I bring to bear a postclassical narratology sensibility to my analyses. Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, present postclassical narratology as a way of “transcend(ing) ‘classical’ structuralist narratology, which has been

reproached for its scientificity, anthropomorphism, disregard for context, and gender-blindness” (450). “Whereas structuralism was intent on coming up with a general theory of narrative, postclassical narratology prefers to consider the circumstances that make every act of reading different” (ibid). This is not to say that the turn to postclassical narratology seeks to elide previous iterations or studies of narrative. In fact, classical or structuralist narratology still offers rich areas of analysis like paratext, but I use of postclassical narratology throughout my dissertation to expand the scope of narrative studies in the area of Chicanx/Latinx narrative analysis to include studies of gender and sexuality, among others.

Turning, then, to the processes of narrative construction Michele S. Sugiyama offers a historical caveat when she asserts, for example, that “narrative emerged in human prehistory” (233) – via oral storytelling acts that have passed from one generation to the next. For Sugiyama, narrative is the most crucial component of evolutionary progress among *homo sapiens*, because it functions as a “representation of experience” (Sugiyama 238) that imparts valuable life lessons that subsequent generations are to learn from if they are to survive. Moreover, Marie-Laure Ryan, in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, echoes similar sentiments when she notes, “narrative is an inexhaustible and varied source of education and entertainment; narrative is a mirror in which we discover what it means to be human” (345). Latinx and Chicanx narratives are a window and a mirror on reality. But as Ramon Saldívar adds in *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*, Latinx and Chicanx narratives do “more than simply reflect or mirror a ‘reality.’ It *produces* that reality by a reconstruction and systematic transformation of the older formations of a previous historical moment” (206, emphasis in original).

And while I agree with Saldívar that narrative produces realities that attempt to reimagine

the dominant histories Chicana/Latina literary fiction, film, and television include, my primary emphasis of exploration does not approach Chicana/Latina narratives via the “context of the broad historical events that have formed our times” (Saldívar, *Chicano Narrative* 24). Rather, I am drawn to the processes of cultural formations and constructions within Chicana/Latina narratives that establish alternative storyworlds that, in their presentness, identify Chicana/Latina culture formations in progress in literary fiction, film, and television. In other words, while Saldívar engages Chicana/Latina literatures as “history’s resistance to...symbolic structures” (5), I wish to explore Chicana/Latina narratives as documents that continue to push on the boundaries of social and cultural formation of Chicana/Latina groups within the U.S. that are represented in literary fiction, film, and television via constructed storyworlds. Thus, this dissertation examines how authors and directors seek to push against the boundaries of stereotype and misrepresentation of Chicana/Latina characters throughout their work.

When we view Chicana/Latina narratives through a postclassical narrative lens, we begin to identify the mirrored reflections that Chicana/Latina readers see in Chicana/Latina works. This mirrored Chicana/Latina image also affords us the opportunity to reflect upon the many ways Chicana and Latina have been constructed and are perpetuated within, and outside of, American narrative spaces, and how alternative interpretations introduce new ways of reflected Chicana/Latina culture in the United States. It should be noted that while current academic explorations of Chicana/Latina narratives are limited in scope, scholars such as Frederick Luis Aldama and Christopher González have begun to explore how narrative theory can positively influence and progress the study of Chicana/Latina literature. Aldama’s *The User’s Guide to Postcolonial and Borderland Fiction*, for example, relies on the tools of narrative theory to better understand how Latino authors construct literary fictions that engage both Chicana/Latina and

non-Chicanx/Latinx audiences alike, while González's "Intertextploitation and Post Post-Latinidad in *Planet Terror*" examines the multitude of narrative threads that Latinx film director Robert Rodriguez weaves into his films that establishes, according to González, a cinematic intertextploitation-.

By focusing on the explorations of Chicanx/Latinx storyworlds that complicate, challenge, and reimagine Chicanx and Latinx characters in dominant U.S. American spaces like literary fiction, film, and television this dissertation contends that such processes result in, what I term, Enstranged Latinidad. Rather than reproduce accepted tropes and stereotypical presentations of Chicanx/Latinx characters in their storyworlds, I examine those authors, artists and directors that attempt to make new the storyworld spaces that Chicanx/Latinx characters inhabit. Moreover, the identification of Enstranged Latinidad in literary fiction, film, and television also seeks to move beyond traditional Chicanx/Latinx works predicated on opposition or resistance towards dominant Anglo American representations of Chicanx/Latinx populations and which were so prevalent in 1980s and 90s narratives. Rather, this dissertation explores how authors, artists and directors make new, or estrange current ideas and iterations of Chicanxs and Latinxs through multiple narrative mediums. These moments where authors, directors and artists are able to make new for readers and scholars our understandings and expectations of Chicanx and Latinx characters in narratives through specific uses of, for example, coloration, presentation, language, as tools of narrative progression is what I term Enstranged Latinidad.

The term estrangement, a neologism coined by Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky as *ostraniene* or *orstranit* in the original Russian, has maintained a contentious, if not problematic, relationship among narrative and Science Fiction (also known as SF) scholars. *Ostraniene* is often translated into English as defamiliarization by narratologists like Wolf Schmid, Formalist

scholars Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Resis understood defamiliarization as a way for authors to “make strange” ideas of literary “imitation, reproduction, and mimesis” (Schmid 98) that often lead readers to make generalized assumptions. Aside from defamiliarization, Science Fiction scholars, such as Darko Suvin have also engaged *ostraniene* as a mode of analysis, but translated the term to estrangement (rather than enstrangement). For Suvin the process of estrangement “is one of confronting a set normative system—a Ptolemaic-type closed world picture—with a point of view or glance implying a new set of norms” (374). And while Schmid and Suvin’s engagement with Shklovsky’s *ostraniene* provide insightful analysis in their respective work, Shklovsky translator Benjamin Sher’s insightful rebuttal to both defamiliarization and estrangement further complicate using such terms as definitions.

Sher contends with both terms in his “Translators Introduction: Shklovsky and the Revolution” in Shklovsky’s text *Theory of Prose*. Believing that “Shklovsky speaks of *ostraniene* as a process or act that endows an object or image with “strangeness” by “removing” it from the network of conventional, formulaic, stereotypical perceptions and linguistic expressions” (xix), Sher first places both defamiliarization and estrangement at the center of his critique. Beginning with defamiliarization, Sher notes that defamiliarization attempts to “transition” the reader “from the “familiar” to the “unknown” (xix) areas of literature that are made strange during a particular reading process, which Sher believes is the opposite of what Shklovsky sets out identify. Likewise, the term estrangement is “negative and limited”, and “exemplif[ies] the very defect [it] was supposed to discourage” (xix) as an analytical term. Thus, Sher translates *ostraniene* to enstrange and enstrangement as a way of identifying Shklovsky’s truest intentions regarding his analysis of narrative. Shklovsky himself defines the process of enstrangement in his 1917 essay “Art as Technique”. Shklovsky contends that, as a reader

engages a work over time the acts of reading “become habitual, it becomes automatic” so much so that soon after the process of reading a text becomes “unconscious” (1). To combat these habituations however, Shklovsky sought out works that attempted to “recover the sensation of life” as well as works that attempted “to make one feel things; to make the stone stony” (12) again. Shklovsky explored narrative moments that made “objects “unfamiliar,” or “difficult”, or literary elements that tried “to increase the difficulty and length of perception” (2) of a readers’ engagement with a particular text. Shklovsky identifies objects as a type of “ artifact” that “is “artificially” created by the artist in such a way that the perceiver, pausing in his reading, dwells on the text” (12).

For Shklovsky the moment of enstrangement for readers occur when, during the act of reading, they are forced or invited to pause and dwell on a particular literary moment or element of the text they are reading. This particular narrative moment for Shklovsky “is when the literary work attains its greatest and most long-lasting impact” (12). The exploration of narrative enstrangement in Chicanx/Latinx narratives is further established by Frederick L. Aldama, who, in *A Users Guide to Postcolonial and Latino Borderland Fiction*, identifies enstrangement as one of the many narrative elements that an author can use “to push at the boundaries of convention, to deviate unpredictably from aesthetic norms” and wake readers up from a “state of habituation” (36). The process, according to Aldama, allows readers to “acquire a deeper knowledge of the object” that has been made knew “rather than passing over it automatically” (36). This means that as we engage Chicanx/Latinx narrative works, the decisions authors and directors made to use, for example, bilinguality, structure, phenotype, and indigenous elements in their narratives attempt to estrange, or make new our engagements of Chicanxs and Latinxs while also breaking way from stereotypical dominant American representations of Chicanxs and Latinxs that have

been historically perpetuated in the same narrative areas. And while Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis understand enstrangement “not so much as a device as a result obtainable by a number of devices” (5 Lemon & Reis), enstrangement is nevertheless a significant narrative tool that, along with others like paratext, can invite readers and scholars to engage Chicanx and Latinx works in new and exciting ways. Thus, my work complicates the role of narrative formation in Chicanx/Latinx fictional literatures, films, and television by placing close attention to specific moments that make new our engagements of Chicanx/Latinx narratives and introduce an Enstranged Latinidad.

In Chapter One, I pay close attention to the construction, resistance and reconstruction of the historical imagination in Latinx and Chicanx literature and film. Here I focus on modes of resistance in Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s 1967 epic poem “*Yo Soy Joaquin/I am Joaquin*” that are activated through the poetic narrator known, among other names, as Joaquín. Situating Joaquín as an indigenous two-spirit character who, while struggling with oft included notions of history, location, loss, and the emerging self also introduces a Chicanx subjectivity that, in terms of gender identification appears to be more fluid and inclusive than many scholars have historically acknowledged. Through this two-spirit journey that Joaquín embarks on, this chapter attempts to make new our engagement with this seminal work by asserting that since at least the 1960s an indigenously mindful reading of the poem has sought to estrange our ideas of Chicanx masculinity within the United States. Furthermore, by asserting Joaquín as a two-spirit character, this chapter contends that *Yo Soy Joaquin* offers readers rich areas of continued studies regarding the roles and social constructions of masculinity of U.S Chicanxs in relation to an emerging self-definition.

In chapter one will also explore how this emerging Chicanx/Latinx self-definition made its

way into and is further complicated by Rodolfo Anya's *Bless Me, Ultima*, and later on in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Anzaldúa's engagements of perceived cultural constructions of Chicanx/Latinx subjects within the United States, like machismo and gendered inequality, for example, which had been promoted since the 60s, are placed front and center and continue an authorial push to make new our ideas of how Chicanxs in narrative are constructed. I will also explore how, through her work, Anzaldúa makes a critical continuation of Chicanx/Latinx cultural production through her reevaluations of Chicanx/Latinx sites of struggle and discontinuity in the areas of language and indigenism. However, Anzaldúa, like Gonzales and Anaya, continues to estrange ideas of Chicanidad/Latinidad through the introduction of the *mestiza consciousness* as a Chicanx, woman-centered locale. To contextualize my argument, I turn to Sheila Contreras's *Bloodlines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature* offers significant insight into Anzaldúa's methodologies and approaches as it identifies Anzaldúa's problematic process of indigenous formations within her own works. By reading Anzaldúa alongside Contreras's criticism, this section of my chapter will work to more fully develop the problematic role indigenism maintains as a narrative tool that produces a specifically unique Chicanx/Latinx narrative culture. Nevertheless, the role of Anzaldúa's *mestiza consciousness*, although complicated by dominant Anglo American history, will function as a useful thread of narrative progression because, as will be noted in subsequent chapters, its continued use generates specific cultural identities in fiction, film and literature that problematizes the role of resistance for Chicanx/Latinx narratives in relation to dominant Anglo America.

By examining these works, along with the film *La Mission* directed by Peter Bratt among others, contends that since at least the 1960s Chicanx/Latinx literature and film have relied on

specific storytelling elements such as indigenism to create for readers and viewers identifiable Chicana/Latina narrative cultures via storyworlds pushes against or resists dominant Anglo interpretation of Chicana/Latina subjects espoused in works of literature and film. Furthermore, in constructing narrative culture in fiction, film, and television *enstranged* Latinidad will be used to explore, more fully, the ways authors and directors deliberately produce culture in their work that, in turn, continue to reshape ideas of a U.S. Chicana/Latina self-definition. Throughout this work I maintain that such enstrangements can be identified amid the moments where specific elements of Chicana/Latina resistance to dominant Anglo American culture generate a struggle or identified difference, and which function as crucial elements of Chicana/Latina identification in subsequent periods. More importantly, the various iterations of culture like the use of indigenism identified in fictional narratives, when placed alongside or against each other, highlight an authorial or directorial directions taken when producing narrative culture that focuses on Chicanas and Latinas.

Chapter two explores how audio and visual devices are used in the cable and network television shows *Caprica* (2010-2011) and *The Event* (2010-2011) to discomfort and powerfully engage their ideal readers. In a focused analysis of structure (genre), casting, costuming, music score, and language in both series, this chapter examines how each show carries a unique audiovisual stamp that creates conflicting emotional states—but with the ultimate aim of opening audience's eyes to new ways of perceiving, thinking, and feeling about issues of immigration, lost homelands, and disenfranchisement. For example, the neo-noir feel and look of *Caprica* conveys powerfully a story of the Adama family (headed by Joseph Adama played by Esai Morales) as it comes to terms with its forced migration from lands ripped apart by civil war, and struggles with racism as a minority Tauron population living in a new land where they are often

referred to as “stinking dirt eaters.” Chapter 2 also examines how the straightforward realist feel and look of *The Event* conveys a sci-fi (near-future) earth-located story of Elias Martinez (played by Blair Underwood), Afro-Latino President of the United States, attempting to contain (some held in a concentration camp in Alaska), and even exterminate the extraterrestrials living among the human population; indeed, while “aliens” age much slower than humans, they are indistinguishable emotively and cognitively from humans. This chapter will also explore how the two series’ audiovisual elements at once work to immerse audiences into their respective storyworlds and, by way of allegorical palimpsest, discomfortingly agitate audiences to reconsider today’s racial and political landscape.

Chapter two builds on the concept of the “will to style” (Aldama 27) along with that of the concept of phenotype as monstrous code for Othered subjects in science fiction (Lynnette Porter). Building on both concepts, I attend to how the televisual SF directors use their will to style to destabilize codes of cultural reception, ultimately working to estrange and make new, audience experiences of Latinx characters in televisual SF spaces. Turning to the series I maintain the argument that although Chicanx/Latinx authors and directors willfully style, imagine and re-imagine Chicanx/Latinx characters in new and exciting ways, (in this case SF spaces), they nevertheless are associated, are connected to, or cast as minority alien others. Such representations of Chicanx/Latinx populations within the United States perpetuates dominant Anglo ideas of Chicanxs and Latinxs as a secondary, alien culture even among the dominant Anglo American culture ideals of the “final frontier.”

In Chapter three, I explore the 2015 graphic novel *DjangoZorro* written by Quentin Tarantino and Matt Wagner, and colored by Brennan Wagner. Working through these texts, I explore the various ways Wagner as a colorist continues to reimagine how Chicanxs and Latinxs

are colored as characters, and the narrative implications these specific types of coloring present to readers as authors, artists, and colorists create storyworlds. By paying close attention to the phenotypic presentations of the indigenous Yaqui character Conchita (also known as Consula ave Maria de Peralta de Cordoba), chapter 3 examines how readers and viewers are effectively able to associate specific and directional uses of language, artistic constructions of phenotype along the US-Arizona borders as locations of oppression via the narrative tool of paratextual analysis. Wagner, for example, introduces a graphic storyworld that complicates notions and ideas of phenotypic representation through an extremely significant, yet consistently secondary character in Conchita whereby phenotypic whiteness and darkness colored onto Conchita are associated with ideas Anglo European power and oppression. By paying close attention to the phenotypic changes that Wagner colors onto Conchita throughout the graphic novel, readers and scholars identify a visual framing, or narrative paratext that perpetuates current, dominant Anglo American assumptions regarding power relations whereby whiteness is associated with power and control, and darkness is correlated with subordinated, loss of power and a much lower, even subservient social status.

Issue of phenotype and coloration are not solely tied to *DjangoZorro* or the graphic novel. The 2016 comic series *Red Wolf* visually complicates ideas of phenotypic relation to power through sheriff's deputy Daniela Ortiz. Following her rise to Sheriff, this chapter continues to document the visually problematic result of coloring as it relates to a form of paratextual analysis. By remaining mindful of both Conchita and Daniela, this chapter contends that in considering graphic and comic phenotype as a visual frame of analysis it introduces a new area of paratextual analysis in narrative studies. To make my case I build on conceptual apparatus offered by Lisa Garcia-Bedolla, Lourdes Torres, and Aldama (*Your Brian on Latino*

Comics) as my analytical scaffold for enriching our understanding of how *Red Wolf* distills then recreates a US-Americas reality increasingly made up of Latinos who become phenotypically lighter as they climb the prescribed ladders of American power. I conclude this chapter by reiterating that since the 1960s Chicanx/Latinx characters in various narrative forms, and the authors/directors who create these forms continue to enstrange our ideas of what Chicanxs and Latinxs are, how they are constructed, and how they are projected. This estranged Latinidad establishes progressively new, specific Chicanx/Latinx storyworlds that are ripe for continued exploration.

In Chapter four I move away from fictional literatures to explore the many ways film director Robert Rodriguez establishes new and alternative forms of Chicanx/Latinx narrative culture via his film *Machete* (2010). Using Aldama's concept of a cinematic blueprint this chapter explores how Rodriguez structures his film via code-switching to fashion a film that makes new the idea of a Chicanx film. Throughout this chapter I contend that Rodriguez's deliberate, willful styling's of Chicanx characters in his films establish a cinematic storyworld that attempts to enstrange, or make new, the audiences cinematic experience of Chicanx cinema as well as Chicanxs *in* cinema. I will also attend to Rodriguez's reliance on these cinematic devices to produce a specific cinematic Chicanx/Latinx culture that likewise estranges audience's perceptions of Chicanx/Latinx characters and storyworlds through his films. This chapter will also discuss how Rodriguez's construction of culture attempts to move audiences, not only in terms of soliciting rather formulaic B-movie emotion and cognitive schemas (set up already at the film's outset) but also in directing thought and feeling toward contemporary issues of immigration and *Mexicanidad*. Rodriguez's use of devices like language, and politics work to reorganize the "fragments of reality" (*Mex-Cine* Aldama 29) that have come to define narratives

by and about Chicanxs and Latinxs in today's violent, classist, and racist anti-immigration policies in the U.S. This chapter will examine how Rodriguez makes a film that asks audiences to crisscross borders of cinematic convention and experience anew a content-filled film that grapples with issues surrounding today's majoritarian perceptions of Chicanxs and Latinxs, and U.S. civil rights struggles endured and challenged by people of color.

Chapter four also includes the 2009 box office hit *Fast & Furious* directed by Justin Lin as a marker of differentiation as it relates to the cinematic blueprint constructions of Chicanx and Latinx character. Paying close attention to character like drug kingpin Arturo Braga, and his sidekick known as Fenix, this chapter likewise focuses on the role of code-switching and politics in relation to Chicanx and Latinx characters. While *Machete* offers a cinematic blueprint in which Chicanxs and Latinxs can be heroes and villains, Lin's portrayal suggests a continued mistreatment and stereotyping of brown bodies in Hollywood films. Moreover, this chapter also identifies the expendability of brown bodies in *Fast & Furious* through various acts of violence that are deemed heroic, and seen as normal cinematic measures in American films. And while Lin's film reifies stereotypic tropes, this chapter also explores how Rodriguez uses his films to educate and invite filmgoers to step into the shoes of an ideal viewer that will, by the film's close, experience serious, politically charged content within a B-movie envelope via deliberately constructed storyworlds that have centered Chicanx/Latinx experiences.

Finally, in this chapter I use the tools, concepts, and approaches offered by Peter Verstraten (*Film Narratology*), Chon Noriega (*Chicano Film*), Torbin Grodal (*Embodied Visions: Evolution, Emotion, Culture, and Film*), and Laura G. Gutiérrez (*Performing Mexicanidad*) to examine how Rodriguez's work not only challenge, but also reimagines cinema by and about Chicanxs and Latinxs in the 21st century. While such explorations do not appear, at

first glance, to be rather innovative the comparison of *Machete* and *Fast & Furious* remind us, and viewers, just how often and consistently directors rely on historical narratives of Mexican border crossings as sites of American invasion or violence, and Chicanx/Latinx characters as stereotypic, often expendable offenders. As this chapter will show, these films ascribe to majoritarian Anglo American constructions of Mexico, and Chicanxs and Latinxs, which stand in stark contrast to the innovative works of Rodriguez. By working through these films I identify a more nuanced, more progressive Chicanx/Latinx cinematic blueprinting that is made evident in the cinematic storyworlds constructed in these films.

My dissertation ends with a brief analysis of Francisco “Vibe” Ramon, who stars along side Barry Allen in the CW television hit series *The Flash*. Attending to Ramon’s growth and increasing role in the series, I focus on how his role as a member of the STAR labs team complicates traditional expectations of Latinx characters in U.S. American television. In Ramon’s case his character construction as a Puerto Rican Latinx character who is well educated, insightful, and a ‘good guy’ stands in stark contrast with traditional iterations of Chicanx and Latinx characters American television. My closing chapter also examines how Ramon’s role evolves once he learns about meta-human powers that allow him to manipulate space, time, and the molecular fabrics of his other other words, and how begins to harness their full potential as the superhero known as Vibe. While this chapter concedes that Vibe fulfills in some ways stereotypic dominant American tropes, he nevertheless introduces viewers to a new, broader understanding of what a Latinx hero looks and acts like, and just how far Latinx characters are going in American television. Furthermore, I contend that Vibes unique abilities allow us to reconsider and new ways of engaging and reimagining Anzaldúa's borderlands locations. By focusing on his specific abilities to open up “breaches” between his world and

many others, Vibe becomes, in character and practice, a borderlands conduit through which the Flash is able to travel from one earth to the next. Thus, this chapter ends by contending that the ideas of borderlands are now moving geographic borders on planet Earth, and otherworldly planetary locations to include various multiverses.

CHAPTER 1

Enstranged Indigeneity in Chicane/Latine Narratives

“and I am her
and she is me”

-*Yo Soy Joaquin* Rodolfo Gonzalez-

Chicane/Latine authors and filmmakers since the 1960s, although focused on minority groups like Chicane and Latine, have continued to write literature and produce films centralized around Chicane and Latine within the broader, dominant Anglo American social and academic space. Understanding their historical presence and production, this field has grown to include narratives that function as referential points of engagement for Chicane/Latine writers and directors of subsequent generations who, like their narrative predecessors, seek to resist dominant Anglo American subjugations through their work. However, over time narratives of Chicane and Latine resistance have themselves expanded into new works that incite change and self-definition in new ways. Accordingly, this chapter turns to a series of Chicane/Latine narratives from the 1960s to the present as a way of examining how Chicane/Latine writers and filmmakers have historically maintained specific threads of resistance in their work. Moreover, by documenting this historical trajectory, this chapter also examines the many ways authors and directors have, over time, relied on or turned to specific narrative “tools” that produce resistant Chicane/Latine narratives. The uses of racial self-definition via the narrative tool of indigenism, for example, in Chicane/Latine narratives highlights a continued presence of marginality along an ever expanding and constantly shifting U.S.-Mexican border. Accordingly, this chapter examines how the narrative uses of indigenism in relation to U.S. marginalization create and maintain a specific Chicane/Latine self-definition within the U.S. that has come to represent a significant part of a broader Chicane/Latine narrative tradition. Moreover, this chapter will

likewise explore narrative movements that move beyond oppositional resistance and towards broader, uniquely Chicanx and Latinx influences that affect the narratives a reader engages.

The turn to indigenism as a tradition of reference for writers and filmmakers who seek to establish a Chicanx/Latinx non-Anglo self-definition, necessitates some guiding precepts that shape my engagement and analysis of Chicanx/Latinx indigenism of the fictional and filmic selections that follow. I would also like to clarify my understanding of marginality that I will rely on as well. In looking to the threads of indigenism I turn to Chican@ scholar Sheila M. Contreras who, in *Bloodlines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature*, acknowledges that as a population, “Chicanas and Chicanos are indigenous to the Americas” (1), and have maintained a contested presence in Central, South and North American. Moreover, Chicanx cultural practices should be understood as “another stage in the history of the representations of Indians” (9). Furthermore, when considering Chicanx writings Contreras notes that indigenous practices have “been used to refer to texts that privilege and valorize Indigenous ancestry and culture” (Contreras 23). In other words, for Contreras the use of indigenous motifs, practices, and references in Chicanx narratives establish a culture of the Americas that attempts to break away from the dominant Anglo American idea of Chicanxs and Latinxs in the United States and to establish a specific history unique to Chicanxs and Latinxs. And while she rightly contends that the “practice of elevating the Indian past does not break radically with existing and dominant traditions,” she nevertheless acknowledges the “paradox, that is, the longing for a pre-colonial past that can never be known” (165). From Contreras’ vantage, the inclusion of indigenous histories and practices situates Chicanxs firmly within the Americas, and yearning for a past that can only be invented, in part, within the literary and filmic imaginary of Chicanx and Latinx writers and filmmakers.

Likewise, the use of indigenism in relation to Chicane/Latine marginality among American populations has often been used by authors and directors of Chicane literature and film. Ramon Saldivar, for example, shares his understanding of Chicane marginality within the U.S. when he notes, the Chicane “is both Mexican and American and also neither one nor the other, completely. It remains on that precarious utopian margin *between* the two...sovereign states of Mexico and the United States” that resist “racist, classist, patriarchal...and specified gender roles” (emphasis original Saldivar 174-175). Saldivar’s understanding of margins as those sites of existence between established locations of geography and identity, underscore an engagement of a Chicane self-definition that is found amid the margins of delineated social, racial, and gendered locations. As will be discussed further, this existence in *between* Mexican and American cultures produced a “mestizaje, the hybridity, the bricolage, the rasquache interventions” (Sandoval, Aldama, García 1) that has become emblematic of Chicane/Latine narratives from the 1960s into the 21st century. This consist, cultural in-betweenness identified as mestizaje introduced alternative ways of conceptualizing a Chicane/Latine identity from a Chicane/Latine point of view, and that was not wholly reliant the non-dominant American iterations of a Chicane/Latine self. Moreover, mestizaje in the late 20th and early 21st century reconciles the pre-Columbian indigenous, Spanish European, and American cultural mixing that has come to identify Chicanes and Latinas in the United States.

Working to establish a tradition of reference in Chicane literature and film this chapter turns to the Chicano activist Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s 1967 poem *I am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquin* as a point of reference, influence, and contestation, that impacted the subsequent works of Chicane literature and film. In establishing Gonzales’s poem as a point of reference, I acknowledge that Chicane Latino literature “was not born in the 1960s” (Aldama 31), and note

this selection is not an inceptionary reference, but it is nevertheless considered to be “the nascent moment of Chicano identitarian discourse” (Torres-Sallant 452). Turning to the poem, the historical journey that identifies a positive racial self-definition guides Joaquín, the poem’s speaker, as he “draws on nearly 2000 years of history in Mexico and the United States” (Torres-Sallant 456) searching for his self in relation to conquest and colonization. Throughout his search, Joaquín acknowledges his pre-Columbian indigenous history when he becomes “Cuauhtémoc,/proud and noble,/ leader of men,/ king of an empire/ (Line 38-41). As the poem continues Joaquín declares, “The Indian has endured and still/emerged the winner,/ (Line 178-180) for the “struggle for cultural survival” (266 Line 12) against Anglos, and chooses to call himself a “Chicano!” (279 Line 506). For Joaquín, to be Chicano means acknowledging and accounting for an indigenous past that is tied to the Americas, and which is now a part of his Chicano racial self-definition.

Joaquín’s closing lines, however, confirms another truth regarding Chicano self-definition in that although his struggle to define himself had led to a significant moment of self-identification as a Chicano, he is also defined as one who is “Aztec prince *and* Christian Christ” (emphasis mine Line 521). Joaquín’s declaration reaffirms that while he can identify as one who is linked to a royal indigenous history, Chicanxs are also marked by a history of Western subjugation that, over time, has also become a part of their self-definition. Aware of such a history, Joaquín acknowledges the “gachupín Cortez,/ who also is the blood,/the image of myself” (267 Line 44-46). Because of such a history, Joaquín defines the Chicano as one who is made up of an indigenous past of the Americas and by Western conquest. *I am Joaquin/Yo Soy Joaquin*, whom Torres-Sallant described as a “revelation of all Chicanos” (456) struggling for rights in the late 1960s, introduced a Chicano self-definition that celebrated an indigenous non-

European past for populations residing in a western nation that had “wiped out/all my history” (Line 166-167). Joaquín’s definition of a Chicano also acknowledged the necessity to balance themselves amid the margins of their indigenous and suppressive Western European histories. These acknowledgements became referential threads for authors who, in subsequent years, continued to document the precarious balancing act of a Chicanx self definition in the United States.

Turning to the gendered representations of Chicanas throughout *Yo Soy Joaquín/I am Joaquín*, the embodied presentations of female subjects are not introduced until line 212 when Joaquín identifies himself as “the black shawled/faithful woman” (Line 212-213). Soon thereafter Joaquín becomes “faithful/humble...the Virgin of Guadalupe/Tonantzin” (Line 218-222). As Joaquín continues to map out his poetic Chicano history he identifies himself within the eyes of the “eyes of woman” (Line 421) who must “bear the pain of sons long buried or dying” (Line 426/427). Through such lines *Yo Soy Joaquín/I Am Joaquín* identifies Chicanas as virginal, religious beings that are to remain faithful and humble to their Chicano counterparts. Moreover, Joaquín synergistically combines European and Indigenous faiths when he blends Tonantzin, the Mexica goddess of “earth and fertility” into his self-definition (Wolf 35). Aside from such loyalties, Joaquín also identifies Chicanas as suffering mothers whose primary responsibility was to “face life...in sorrow” (Line 444) as she strives to “win this struggle/for [her] son’s” (Line 454/455). Thus, while Joaquín later goes on to identify a Chicano subjectivity as a Chicano “Christ” (Line 521), the poem likewise establishes Chicana’s as women whose subjectivities were intended to empower their Chicano sons.

However, the turns to Chicana and indigenous identified women throughout the poem invite readers to reexamine the roles of gendered subjectivity that Joaquín introduces. By this I

mean that although Joaquin has been and continues to be historically identified as a consistent gendered male subject, Joaquin's assertions, "I am...The Virgen of Guadalupe,/Tonantzín, Aztec goddess, too." (Lines 116-118) produces a reminder to readers that when Joaquín confesses "her eyes a mirror of all the warmth/and all the love for me,/and I am her/and she is me" (Lines 448-450) he is suggesting an indigenous two-spirit construction of the self that is mindful of a Chicana character whose written identity is much more fluid than the traditionally prescribed roles of male and/or female and warrants further exploration. In asserting a two-spirit identity I invoke Alex Wilson's paraphrasing of Jacobs and Thomas iterations of the term. For Wilson "[T]wo-spirit identity affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity, including sexuality, gender, culture, community, and spirituality. That is, the sexuality of two-spirit people cannot be considered as separate from the rest of an individual's identity" (305). If, then, Joaquín is understood as the two-spirit character whose identity cannot be grafted out or subsumed by one gender or another s/he makes new or estranges traditional readings and engagements of the work itself.

Indeed, the call for an indigenous two spirit reading of *Yo Soy Joaquin* does appear to move away from historical readings of the poem. Since its publication scholars have understood the poem as a nationalist and patriarchally sexist work. And I readily acknowledge that throughout the poem Chicanas in Joaquín's poetic journey rally around, pray for, and humbly sustain their Chicano male counterparts as they resisted marginalization within the U.S and remained within oppressive U.S. Anglo and Chicano frameworks of mistreatment. However, to consider Joaquin a two spirit character implicates her/him within this scope of mistreatment and oppression. Indeed, Joaquín's two-spirit self-definition makes the process of gender identification more fluid and thereby complicates the rigid roles of gender as specific markers of

association which becomes that much more significant when we remember the profoundly influential role this poem maintains as a historical, Chicano nationalist document. Traditionally, Chicana/Latina scholars have asserted that Chicanas were not seen as political equals, but were instead “sexualized within (Chicano) movement spaces” as submissive, supportive aids “instead of political comrades” (Blackwell 70). These Chicano frameworks of interpretation motivated many Chicanas actively to resist the oppressive forms of subjugation that Chicano males attempted to foist upon them, and as Chicana subjectivity evolved into the 70s Chicanas began to more actively voice their concerns regarding their gendered subjugation in relation to dominant Anglo America and Chicano males who sought to exploit Chicanas who fought and struggled alongside them.

In asserting that Chicanas voiced their concerns in the 1970s I do not mean to say that Chicanas had not been struggling against forms of oppression until then. In fact, Vicki L. Ruiz, in *From Out of The Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America*, notes, that in the early 1900s women of Mexican descent were already “creating, accommodating, resistant, and transforming the physical and psychological environs of their...lives in the United States” (xv). For Ruiz, the gendered and patriarchal expectations and stereotypes that Chicanas actively resisted, such as the suffering mother and humble virgin that were championed as benchmarks of Chicana identity during the Chicano movement, reflected a historical thread of Chicana resistance to such inequalities within the U.S. In addition to resisting such subjectivities and stereotypes, Chicanas also had to push against a Chicano male movement ideology that, at times, identified Chicanas as the catalyst for the oppression and second class existence Chicana endured. Predicating their actions towards Chicanas on la “Malinche, the Nahuatl woman who translated for and advised Cortés” Chicanas “came to symbolize female treachery, unreliability

and victimization” (Contreras 107) for many Chicano men of the movement. Yet to read Joaquín as also Tonantzin aligns her/him with the very Chicana population that sought gendered equality during the late 60s and early 70s. Moreover, identifying Joaquín as a two-spirit character invites us to reimagine *Yo Soy Joaquín* as a much more inclusive work than we have understood it to be. In fact, in aligning Joaquín as a two spirit character we begin to push back the historical period of identitarian politics of inclusion and exclusion for Chicanxs and locate it within the lines of this particular poem.

In claiming a two spirit presence in *Yo Soy Joaquín* via the narrative tool of indigenism we begin to uncover another layer of resistance that warrants further exploration. Indeed, Christina M. Hebebrand reminds us that throughout the poem readers are intended to “feel the *oppression* inflicted upon the minority by the dominant culture and the speakers attempt to find support in his own community, knowing that he will nevertheless have to live in the world of the dominant group” (emphasis mine 83). Likewise, the interrelatedness of a Chicana and Indigenous self reminds us of the “shared history of Chicanos/as and Native Americans” who “struggle to establish a unified bicultural identity” (Hebebrand 1) within the greater U.S. Aside from the emotional elicitation, “this much-anthologized work is often cited as an exemplar of Chicano/a nationalist ideology” (Ontiveros 102). Keeping this nationalist thread in mind, scholar Maylei Blackwell ties the work to the author when, in *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*, she notes, “The Chicano Movement constructed a specific kind of masculinity....Perhaps best epitomized by Corky Gonzales, an award-winning boxer, this (Chicana@)movements icon’s self-determined, heterosexual masculinity was a model for young militant Chicano men” (97). For scholars like Blackwell, the poem has been sutured to its writer, and has thus taken on the norms, beliefs, and specific ideologies that Gonzales was himself was

said to reflect. This move, while often made by readers and scholars alike, is inherently problematic because of the potential reading biases it creates. By this I mean that while Joaquín can (and should) be read as a narrator whose gender is fluid and constantly shifting, the name Joaquín effectively becomes as pseudonym for Gonzales himself. Sadly, this has resulted in a rather habitual reading of the poem as macho, nationalistic, and patriarchally oppressive.

Although I agree that *Yo Soy Joaquin* maintains strong threads of Chicano Movement nationalism throughout, Hebebrand, Otiveros, and Blackwell's claims seem to omit Joaquín's identifications as also a gendered woman throughout the poem. The identification as gendered women via the Virgen de Guadalupe, Tonantzin, and the crying mother (to name but a few) in *Yo Soy Joaquin* troubles the purely and totalizing ideology of nationalist ideas of Chicano machismo in the poem. More importantly, the indigenous identification of Joaquín as a two spirit individual enstranges our reading of the character Joaquín in relation to dominant Anglo, Chicano nationalist and Chicana communities within the U.S during the late 1960s. To assert that a two spirit reading of the epic poem *Yo Soy Joaquin* enstranges, or makes new, our reading of the poem, likewise pushes on the boundaries of traditional narrative studies. In fact, "contemporary narrative theory is almost silent about poetry" (McHale 11). Moreover, those few narrative scholars who explore poetry focus much, if not all, of their attention on the lyric (McHale). Thus, by relying on the use of narration as a narrative tool in which Joaquín identifies himself as a two-spirit individual, *Yo Soy Joaquin* continues to enrich our scholastic understanding of the poem by expanding our frame of analysis to include an epic poem that invites us to reconsider indigenous two spirit presence-ing as a form of indigenous enstrangement.

To be clear, however, I briefly want to reiterate that I am not saying here that this is first time that the epic poem *Yo Soy Joaquin* is being read with an eye towards an indigenous

presence. As this chapter will continue to show, the role of pre-Columbian indigenism functions and narrative form of Chicane/Latine characterization in subsequent decades. What I do wish to clearly point out, though, is that Joaquín is not only an indigenous character throughout the poem, but an indigenous two-spirit character whose gender is not as rigidly scripted as we would like to think. Secondly, by reading and engaging *Yo Soy Joaquín* through a narrative lens, this particular poem seeks to broaden the scope of narrative analysis to include works that may not necessarily fit within traditional frames of analysis. Ergo, we are invited to break from our historically habituated readings of the poem, and to “look again *at* and *into* those objects to which we have habituated ourselves” (Aldama 36), like macho male indigenism, and consider the many ways an indigenous two spirit reading of the poem makes new our understanding of Chicano nationalism, and subsequent criticisms that omit the paired gendered female identity that also makes up Joaquín’s identity. The use of indigenism as a narrative tool of Chicane identity that “stress[ed] the non-European racial and cultural aspects of their background” (Goldman 167), was also prevalent in the 1970s works of literature.

Moving into the 70s, Rodolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima*, like *I Am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín* continues to maintain the threads of indigenism via histories, practices, and existence amid the margins of a dominant Anglo American society. Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima* introduces the main character Antonio Maréz y Luna, as a young boy who is torn between his Catholic upbringing, and those of Ultima, a “curandera” (4) of Pre-Columbian indigenous remedies. Throughout the novel one of Antonio’s primary struggles centralizes on his decision to either become a priest in the Catholic Church and fulfill the role his mother intended for him, or become the curandero that Ultima believes he should become. As the novel comes to an end, Antonio ponders the reactions of this family when he reveals that, “I doubted the God of my

forefathers, the God of the Lunas, and knew I praised the golden carp” (244) which he identified as a “miraculous...pagan god” (105). In renouncing his Catholic faith to follow Ultima in the pre-colonial practices of curanderismo, Antonio highlights a privileging of indigenous faith practices over dominant Anglo American beliefs. Moreover, by choosing to become a curandero, Antonio has likewise chosen to maintain the healing practices of “the ancients” (4) who had come before him. In choosing to follow the ancient way of pre-Columbian healing practices, Antonio reflects the choice Joaquín makes in claiming an indigenous past and history that has come before him, and which becomes a part of his self-definition.

The issues surrounding Antonio’s narrative decision to turn away from Catholicism highlight a unique thread of referencing to Gonzales’ *I am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín* through the consistent narrative use of indigenism. Returning, briefly to one of Joaquín’s self-definitions as “Aztec prince and Christian *Christ*” (emphasis mine) we see that while Joaquín has maintained the thread of an indigenous past in the Aztec (Mexico) prince he also has situated himself amid the margins of Western religion by, in fact, identifying himself as Christ. This faith on the margins maintains a prominent role throughout *Bless Me, Ultima* as Antonio struggles to come to terms with his decisions to embrace his indigenous healing practices or fulfill his mothers dream of becoming a priest. However, rather than publicly reject Catholicism and the priesthood, Antonio, upon Ultima’s death, chooses to honor the Catholic “mass of the dead” (248) that would be given to Ultima at the church, which “was prescribed by custom” (248). Completing this social custom, readers begin to see that Antonio’s identity amid the margins, like those of Joaquín, are predicated by their struggle with indigenous identities, and that they inherently challenge customs of a dominant Anglo-American faith practice through his honoring of the “ancients” (4) by becoming a curandero. Yet, while Antonio maintains these threads of

references *Bless Me, Ultima* is not a replication of Gonzales's poem, and Antonio's decision to quietly become a curandero reflects a differentiation in Antonio's privileging of curanderismo rather than an acceptance of both Christianity and Curanderismo. Antonio's choice to become a curandero compounds his marginalization within his culturally catholic community because, although he would continue to maintain pre-Columbian healing practices, he, like Ultima, would be considered "evil because [they] did not understand" (236) such practices.

These growing threads of indigenism that *I Am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín* introduced and were evident in *Bless Me, Ultima* where also represented in the works of authors in subsequent decades. The turns to indigenism by Chicana authors, in particular, "set in motion an empowering explanation of racial identity in which Chicanas'/os' non-white status became evident of an indigenous lineage...rivaling anything claimed by Europeans" (Contreras 74). These claims for a non-white Chicana self-definition within the U.S., however, became increasingly predicated on a centralized male ideology that, at times, identified Chicana's as the catalyst for their struggles via "Malinche, the Nahuatl woman who translated for and advised Cortés...came to symbolize female treachery, unreliability, and victimization" (Contreras 107). These Chicano male-centric searches for self-definition came to ahead in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* which not only identified the tenants of an indigenous past, but sought to critically establish "an accounting with all three cultures-white, Mexican, Indian" (44) that had come to represent Chicana's and Chicanos in the 1960s and 70s. And while Anzaldúa, in her text, acknowledge that she had "read *I am Joaquín*" (81) the primary influence the poem had on her did not centralize around Joaquín's acknowledging of an indigenous self-definition or that, as I have noted, Joaquín struggles with his/her ideas of a gendered two-spirit identity. Rather, the most profound influence that *I am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín* had on Anzaldúa was her surprise "to

see a bilingual book by a Chicano in print” (81-82).

As an evolving Chicana subjectivity moved into the 1980s, issues of gender and sexuality became significant areas of exploration for Chicana authors and scholars who continued to resist Chicano nationalist ideologies of sexuality and gender. Indeed, Frederick L. Aldama, in *The Routledge Concise History of Latino/a Literature*, notes such changes when he claims that acts of Chicana/a “reclamation, making visible, and affirmation” of Chicanas in the U.S. during this time were championed by “feminist, lesbian, and gay Latino/a authors” (98). Literarily, calls for gender reclamation and visibility came to the fore in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color* (Hereafter *This Bridge*) that was edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Consisting of academic essays, personal narratives and poetry penned by Chicana, Indigenous, African American, and many other women of color fighting for equality within the U.S., *This Bridge* not only confronted White and Chicano males who mistreated women of color, but it also confronted White feminists who sought to appropriate and, in turn, make the struggles women of color were experiencing “invisible” (Anzaldúa 165). Furthermore, *This Bridge* attempted to bridge the gaps of invisibility, marginalization and “multiple exclusions of lesbians, and bisexuals, and gender-nonconforming people of color within the Gay Liberation Front, the Chicano movement, Black Power, and New Left, the women’s movement” (Blackwell 158) that Chicanas, alongside other women of color consistently experienced in the United States.

In response to these acts of marginalization and invisibility writers from within the pages of *This Bridge*, like Anzaldúa for example, asserted “the dangers we face as women writers of color are not the same as those of white women though we have many in common. We don’t have as much to lose—we never had any privileges” (165). For Anzaldúa and the writers included in the collection the issues of class and racial privileges that White women maintained

established significant divides within the feminist movement. These divisions were often actualized when women of color became the “tokenized” (168) spokesperson of color within a “definition of feminism that still renders most of [them] invisible” (167). For Anzaldúa and other women writers of color White American feminists, although themselves resisting dominant Anglo male power structures, continued to perpetuate a Chicana invisibility that stymied much of their resistance work. Issues of class and upward mobility predicated, in part, on being part of a majoritarian U.S. social and cultural group created locations of privilege for White women which further exacerbated the margins of difference between White feminists and women of color during this time. While Anzaldúa identified women of color as Third World feminists who sought to “erase” (167) the “imprints” (67) of patriarchy, contributors like Doris Davenport exposed white feminists as an “elitist, crudely insensitive, and condescending” (86) group of oppressors who likewise subjugated women of color within the US. Thus, while *This Bridge* “began as a reaction to the racism of white feminist” it “soon became a positive affirmation of the commitment of women of color to [their] own feminism” (Moraga xxiii) that was not solely predicated on white American feminism.

The collective call for Chicana writers and scholars to produce work that reflected their own experiences directed the evolutionary progress of a Chicana subjectivity that continued to resist the prescriptive labels of subjectivity that Chicano males, and dominant White Anglo male and Anglo women had foisted upon Chicana women throughout the late 60s, 70s and early 80s. In 1987 the call for a rearticulated feminism of color was taken up more directly in Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Hereafter *Borderlands*). Written as a series of testimonios and poems, Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* re-established a Mexican-American borderland from the subjectivity of a Chicana, lesbian feminist from south Texas. From this

alternative América, Anzaldúa introduced a border culture located in between the United States and Mexico. Situated on the Rio Bravo Anzaldúa described the borderlands as “*un herida abierta*” (25) between Mexico and the United States that represented the physical marker of differentiation for its residents. Rather than perpetuate critiques of racial and ethnic oppression, the borderlands Anzaldúa introduced to readers continued to push its’ scope of inclusivity to include “the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer...the mulato, the troublesome...the half breed, the half dead; in short those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the normal (25). For Anzaldúa, the borderlands were a geographic and cultural space whereby Chicanas, and those who cross the confines of dominant social normality had a location from which to exist. Moreover, because the borderlands were geographically situated *in between* the United States and Mexico, their inhabitants, however they chose to identify themselves, were able to maintain a presence within the margins of borderlands that had, until then, been suppressed by dominant American and nationalistic Chicanos.

Another significant contribution that *Borderlands* made to the reshaping and reimagining of a Chicana subjectivity was the introduction of what Anzaldúa identifies as “a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*” (99). Through the new *mestiza* Anzaldúa introduced a consciousness that was not bound by rigid stereotypes and expectations, but rather embraced the “ambiguity” (101) of their gendered, sexual, and social selves in relation to Chicano and Anglo male oppressors. The new *mestiza* also continued the struggle for equality through the confrontation of the Chicano “men of our race” to “demand[s] the admission/acknowledgement/disclosure/testimony that they they wound us, violate us...and are afraid of our power”, and contended that “the struggle of the *mestiza* is above all a feminist one” (106). In confronting Chicano men, Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* attempts to “develop equal power

with [men] and those who have shamed us” (106). By continuing the struggle for gender and sexual equality, Anzaldúa’s new *Mestiza* reflected a continued push for equality from a Chicana feminist perspective that echoed similar cries for equality by Chicanas in the 1970s. What the new *mestiza* introduced, however, was a woman-centric consciousness from which to make assertions for equality, and a Chicana subjectivity that was no longer perpetuated by Chicano and Anglo male stereotypes, but from a Chicana borderlands location.

For Anzaldúa a Chicano subjectivity that reflected *Borderlands* was one that had evolved from a Chicano male-centric search for agency and equality within to the U.S.. Instead Anzaldúa’s *borderland mestiza* included and relied on the voices of Chicana *mestizas* who were able to embrace the various mutations of Chicana subjectivity in all of its forms. Furthermore, while Anzaldúa recognized those “gentle straight men” that were likewise beginning to resist the tropes and types of previous generation, she acknowledges “only gay men have had the courage to expose themselves to the woman inside them and to challenge the current masculinity” (106). Consequently, the progress of an evolving Chicanx subjectivity near the end of the 80s continued to push on the margins of gender and began to explore in earnest the omitted voices of Chicana lesbian and gay men who not only resisted traditional gender roles of masculinity, like machismo, and roles of femininity such as those of the suffering hetero-normative mother. Instead, *Borderlands* established a subjectivity that also resisted traditional iterations of sexuality and introduced alternative ways of exploring Chicanx subjectivities that were not necessarily bound by generic, patriarchal ideals of both masculinity and femininity via her introduction of a much more inclusive borderlands that included those individuals exploring their sexuality. Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, like its literary predecessors, sought to “overcome the tradition of silence” (81) that dominant U.S. white male and female, and Chicano men perpetuated.

As Chicano narratives progressed into the 90s the threads of Chicanx indigenism that were utilized in Chicanx/Latinx literature likewise maintained a presence in film. The threads of indigenism via specific iconography continued as deliberate markers of Chicanx/Latinx Otherness in various films produced by Chicanx and Latinx filmmakers. . By this I mean that while the use of indigenous characters has often been used to identify the American Other, directors used specific markers of indigenism as a tool of the differentiation of Chicanx/Latinx characters in relation to other characters; white or otherwise. Now the use of indigenism in Chicanx/Latinx films is not all together new. In fact, Chon Noriega, in *Chicanos and Film: Essays on Chicano Representation and Resistance*, has noted that when it comes to Chicano film the “four elements of Chicano thought and artistic expression-resistance, affirmation, and maintenance, and *mestizaje*- provide the basis for a culture-specific analysis” (emphasis original 169) of Chicanx film. Charles Tatum pushes the idea of *mestizaje* further when he describes it as the “recognition of and pride in Chicano culture’s Indio-Mexican history and legacy as well as its Spanish European past”(60). Yet the marked difference of *mestizaje* and indigenism as it relates to this chapter are predicated on how these forms of expression are activated by directors. While Noriega calls a particular recognition and pride as a form of expressive acknowledgment, the films that follow go beyond these parameters and utilize indigenism as tools of narrative progression. By this mean that when we consider films that rely on or utilize Chicanx/Latinx characters, indigenism becomes a narrative tool that aids in progressing a film while inviting its viewers to consider Chicanx/Latinx indigenism in new ways.

Robert Rodriguez’s 1997 film *From Dusk Till Dawn*, for example, opens along the rural borderlands of South Texas and follows the Anglo American psychopathic, bank-robbing Gecko brothers as they make their way south into Mexico. Once the Gecko brothers have crossed the

border, they, along with a trio they have kidnapped, make their way to the Titty Twister, a bar and strip club where the Geko brothers are to meet up with their contact. Upon entering the club, the camera pans around the bar as the Gecko brothers and viewers are introduced to multiple threads of indigenism via women dressed in Indian headdress and loincloths, and a thick stoned building interior with iconography that resembles a sort of temple like structure. By utilizing these specific visual tools Rodriguez attempts to create “the film’s geocultural locations” in which indigenism is used as a tool to progress the trajectory of the narratives themselves (Saldívar 214). By this I mean that for Rodriguez indigenism is used as a narrative device that establishes a location of action that, combined with the rest of the film, progress the overall narrative. As the patrons take their seats, they and theater viewing audiences are introduced to Satánico Pandemonium, a bikini clad snake wrangling, indigenous head dress wearing, dancer who illicit the complete attention of the entire bar.



Figure 1: Satánico Pandemonium makes her entrance

Soon thereafter, however, Pandemonium and the other indigenous dressed dancing women become vampires that prey on the flesh of men patronizing the bar. The film thus becomes, as Frederick L. Aldama puts it in *The Cinema of Robert Rodriguez*, a “south-of-the-

border vamp thriller” (58) for human survival. Throughout the film, as the non-vampire humans walk through the corridors of the Titty Twister, indigenous murals of warriors and maidens are painted on the walls as if to maintain a visual presence of an indigenous past that Rodriguez brings back into our late 20th-century view. Once the vampires have been defeated by a few surviving humans and they are able to make their getaway, the film zooms out and pans to the rear exterior of the Titty Twister and “end[s]... with an iconoclastic image of an ancient Aztec-Mayan temple descending into a cavernous pit” (Aldama 53). It is at this moment that audiences are confronted with the cinematic reality that they have been viewing a film driven by indigenism via character and location, and where the “U.S.-Mexico border” is understood as a “lawless place ruled by dark mythology” (Aldama 60). In terms of construction, then, *From Dusk Till Dawn* relies on threads of south of the border indigenism to construct a non-Anglo identity whose iterations of self-characterization are established via the visual presentation of indigenous bodies, indigenous iconography, and through the revealing of the undercover Aztec-Mayan temple the film’s characters escape from.

Aside from the threads of indigenism that Rodriguez infuses into his film, the role of the geographic U.S.-Mexican border is likewise used as the inceptionary location of hybrid human-vampires that inhabit the Aztec-Mayan temple. For Rodriguez, the hybrid human-vampires are constructed to embody the cinematic use of the grotesque, which is described as one continuous engagement with “fear and fascination” (Helyer, qtd. Aldama 58). Rodriguez’s construction of vampires who consistently maintain a human bodily form while facially turning into monsters aligns with the in betweenness that has come to narratively represent Chicanxs in the U.S. Only this time Rodriguez makes new for audiences this space by expanding the geographic borders to include human-vampires. Admittedly, these in-between hybrids stand in stark contrast to

struggles of marginalization and in between-ness that characters like Joaquín and Antonio experienced, they are nevertheless constructed in such a way that Rodriguez asks the “audience to disidentify with the main Anglo characters (psychopaths) and to appreciate, think, and feel for Latino’s in more complex, hybrid ways” (Aldama 61). Thus, Rodriguez’s use of the hybrid human-vampire in *From Dusk Till Dawn* continues the thread of marginality whereby such hybrids as “half –breed; half dead” (Anzaldúa 25) constructions reflect a presence amid the margins of the borderlands that Anzaldúa reimagined in the 1980s. As films about Chicanxs continued into the 21st century, this tradition of referencing through the threads of indigenism and marginalization that had come to identify Chicanx literature and film continued to maintain a significant presence.

Peter Bratt’s 2009 film *La Mission* continues to exemplify a tradition of indigenous referencing as it presents viewers with a unique film centralized around Che Rivera and his son Jes. Unlike Rodriguez, however, Bratt’s use of indigenism throughout the film become moments of personal and social awakening that, like Rodriguez’s works, affect the overall arch of the film. More interesting, however, is that *La Mission*’s reliance on the use of indigenous referencing are used as narrative points of empowerment and resistance against issues of gender oppression and historical Chicano nationalism that the film typifies through Che. For *La Mission* indigenism is a location or filmic device that incites social, emotional and cultural change. In other words, to embrace indigenism to be a progressive Chicanx. Living together in San Francisco’s Mission district, Che, a single father, is constructed to epitomize the traditional representations of the ‘authentic’ Chicano male who is introduced as a low-rider driving, Chicano, “o.g”, also known as an original gangster (minute 3). As audiences are introduced to Che in the film’s openings scenes, the camera utilizes quick cuts to shots of various indigenous murals around the Mission

district of San Francisco. The camera cuts back from the murals to residents walking and Bratt splashes the title of the film in Old English letters, and just so happen to also splash across Che himself. Immediately, Bratt invites viewers to understand that Che is La Mission. As audiences follow Che we see him walking by dancers dressed in Mesoamerican garb. Bratt's construction of Che thus reflects an acknowledgement of indigenism in a way that associated Che with as historical Chicano self-definition. Thus, Che's introduction harkens back to Joaquin and Antonio who embraced an indigenous past as part of their self definition predicated on o.g. nationalism and cultural pride that are rooted in indigenism. As the film continues, however, Che's self-definition is contested when he finds out that his son, Jes, has sexual preferences that he does not agree with or accept.

This news directly challenges Che's Chicano self-definition and he is revealed to be a sexist, homophobic Chicano who is unwilling to accept his son for whomever he is. Through his actions Che reflects the Chicano self-definition predicated on a 1960s and 70s male-centrism that valued carnalismo and machismo, and which Anzaldúa contested and reimagined in *Borderlands*, and Joaquín complicated via his two-spirit indigenous identity in *Yo Soy Joaquín*. The remainder of the film chronicles Che's journey as he struggles with his own resistance, rejection, and acknowledgement of his son's sexuality. During this time Che confronts and almost succumbs to his own alcoholic addictions. Che's journey towards acceptance, however, does not occur on his own, and is promoted when comes upon a street side memorial of a murdered Chicano gangbanger and the indigenous dressed dancers honoring the young man. Captivated and drawn towards the crowd by the blowing of a conch shell, Che becomes an active viewer of the memorial dance. What is most revealing about this scene is that Bratt relies on the indigenous Mexica dancers to incite Che's emotional awakening and embracing of his son's

sexuality. For Che, the dancers do not function as elements of pride or recognition, but the needed enlightenment that motivates him to reestablish his lost relationship with his son. As Che watches these dancers storm clouds form, the thunder crashes with the beat of the drums and he is baptized by the rain. It is only after Che has embraced a reimagined self-definition akin to the one introduced by Joaquín and further articulated by Anzaldúa which is more inclusive of gender and sexuality and includes the “continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspects of each new paradigm” (Anzaldúa 102) that he is able to reconnect with his son. Che’s historically defined struggle with his own Chicano self-definition throughout the film, effectively create his locations of marginality between himself, his family and friends, and his own understanding of Chicanx culture. Once Che is able cross the borders of a hetero-normative, male chicano-centric definition, via his progressive indigenous awakening he establishes a self-definition that exists amid the margins of an ever-expanding Chicano/a inclusivity.



Figure 2: Mexica Dancer calls the winds in *La Mission*



Figure 3: Che, via Mexica dancers, is confronted with his cultural and historical role as oppressor

While this chapter has sought to outline the various ways indigenism has been used by authors and directors to reimagine Chicanx/Latinx literature and film, I return to my initial question. Having taken the time to focus on the use of indigenism in Chicanx/Latinx literature and film as a deliberate tool of narrative progression, how or what does this re-imagined use of

indigenism do for readers and viewers affect engagement? If, as Shklovsky reminds us, “art is thinking in images” (5), what do we make of the images of indigenism that are used to progress specific Chicanx/Latinx narratives, and how does this occur for readers and viewers? The answer in this case lies in the process of *ostraneniye*, or the making new for readers and viewers their engagement with indigenism in these works. By pushing the role of narrative indigenism beyond the narrative space of recognition and pride espoused by the likes of the Noriega, and using it as a narrative tool that shapes, reshapes, and/or reimagines Chicanx/Latinx construction, authors like Gonzales and Anaya, and directors like Rodriguez and Bratt attempt to “return sensation to our limbs” (6 Art as Device). They present readers and viewers with indigenism that traverse sexualities, cultural religious norms, and historically traditional ideas of Chicanx/Latinx indigenism that merely ascribe remembrance and pride. Authors and directors like Gonzales and Bratt acutely understand that readers and viewers of Chicanx/Latinx narrative have come to understand indigenism “by their main characteristics” (Shklovsky 1), and utilize their narrative spaces to complicate such notions. Thus, the use of indigenism throughout these works invites us to engage these specific characters by “pricking our conscience” (Shklovsky 3), and pushing the boundaries of conventional iterations of Chicanx/Latinx identitarian constructions in literature and film. The particular push to estrange our engagements of Chicanx and Latinx characters by authors and directors was not only bound to Chicanx/Latinx authors and directors, or to earth for that matter.

CHAPTER 2

Dirty, Stinking, Aliens: Chicanxs and Latinxs in Today's Sci-Fi Televisual Blueprint

As a population group within the United States Chicanxs and Latinxs have not been immune to the influences and impulses of mass media, and, more importantly, unaware of their misrepresentation and/or general invisibility within the U.S. As these consistent omissions and stereotypes have historically made their way into mainstream America, John Berger's observation, in *Ways of Seeing*, that "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (8) pushes me to ask, in what ways has America seen Chicanxs and Latinxs, and how do these visual interactions affect what we know or what we believe about Chicanxs and Latinxs. Since at least the late 1960s Chicanxs have protested "against advertisers, television, networks, and the film industry, charging them with disseminating derogatory stereotypes against Mexican Americans, Mexicans, and other Latino groups" (Noriega 28). Yet, Chicanx and Latinx populations have remained the alien populations that have been consistently perpetuated in American media. As American cinema moved towards the 21st century Chicanx and Latinx characters began to literary embody all that is alien -intergalactic or otherwise- as a representative form of Chicanx/Latinx identity. Take, for example, the 1997 film *Men In Black* directed by Barry Sonnenfeld. As the film opens audience are introduced to "Mikey", who is an intergalactic alien from another planet hiding within the human covering of an undocumented, Spanish speaking Mexican. From the dialogue between Mikey and Agent K we soon learn that Mickey the alien Mexican is a convicted felon, tries to the illegally cross the U.S./Mexican and intergalactic border, and is subsequently dispatched by authorities when he is found out by border patrol agents.



Figure 4: Undocumented border crosser José, played by Sergio Calderon, being discovered as Mikey the illegally intergalactic Earth crosser in *Men in Black*

This scene brings me back to Berger and Gurrerri's observations regarding the process of how audiences engage cinematic and televisual constructions of Chicanx/Latinx populations who are, in this case, presented as foreign, felonious, alien (pun intended) bodies that can be acted and reacted upon by directors and audiences. Film Scholar Rosa-Linda Fregoso, in *Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture*, has noted that since the late 1960s Chicanxs, specifically, and later Latinxs have not taken these constructions, among many others-, lightly, and have sought to challenge American cinema narratives about Chicanx populations through what she calls Chicano cinema which she "summed up as the documentation of social reality through oppositional forms of the knowledge about Chicanos"(xv). While much more on Chicano cinema can be said about this issue (see also Chon Noriega), in mentioning Fregoso's observations, I highlight the fact that Chicanx/Latinx struggles in cinema have not existed within an American media vacuum. By this I mean that as we turn our collective gaze from late 20th century big

screen productions like *Men in Black* to 21st century small screen series like *Caprica* and *The Event*, Chicanx/Latinx issues about stereotypes, omissions, and misrepresentations are no longer lost to directors and producers. José E. Límon, for example, in his essay “Stereotyping and Chicano Resistance: An Historical dimension, has noted that Chicanos have often been depicted as “dirty, violent, hyper sexual, treacherous, and thieving, although he also often appears as cowardly, apathetic, and dormant” (3). Quite frankly, the perpetuation of such types in 21st century film and television, as in *Caprica* and *The Event*, become all the more deliberate and problematic when we acknowledge that since at least the 1960s scholars and activists have made such issues known to directors and audiences through publication and activism. By remaining mindful of these historical, continued objections of Chicanxs and Latinxs in SF spaces, this chapter examines how *Caprica* and *The Event* invite audiences to engage specific characters in their respective storyworld. Moreover, this chapter will pay close attention to the many ways “aliens” are presented to viewing audiences.

In 2010, the science fiction (sci-fi) television series *Caprica* (2010–2011) and *The Event* (2010–2011) introduced audiences to televisual spaces that placed central emphasis on illegally and legally residing extraterrestrials- trials trying to survive and thrive among residential inhabitants. While such storylines sound all too familiar, both series relied heavily on rather unique representations of phenotype and language, which were projected through specific characters to push their sci-fi storylines. Furthermore, “the relationship between race and sf has been largely overlooked by scholars” (Lavender, III, 10) countless number of times, with the directorial deliberateness of phenotype and language even further removed from purely racial explorations. Director Evan Katz, for example, sets *The Event* in the near future, with the fate of the American free world, and planet earth for that matter, in the hands of legally residing Afro-

Latino Cuban American president Elias Martinez (played by Blair Underwood) as he battles human-like illegally residing aliens. Likewise, Ronald D. Moore introduces viewers to Caprica City, a planet whose technological advancements not only make it a residential Mount Olympus for its Caprican residents, but is also the site of interplanetary racism and bigotry endured by refugee resident Taurons. The Graystone and Adama families consume much of the respective series' story lines and function to solidify the social and racial hierarchies and differences in Caprica City—and beyond.

In several of his books such as *Your Brain on Latino Fiction*, *A User's Guide to Postcolonial and Latino Borderland Fiction* and *Mex-Ciné*, Aldama formulates and uses the concept of the will to style. For instance, in *Mex-Ciné*, he defines it as, “A shorthand way to identify the degree of the presence of willfulness in the director's use of technique, imagination, and responsibility to subject matter” (56). When there is a greater degree of a will to style present in the making of a given cultural artifact, it can produce in form and content an object that “can open our eyes, ears, thoughts, and feelings to something new” (121). The deliberate “will to style” that Katz and Moore incorporate into their characters in *Caprica* and *The Event*, respectively, create a space that is unquestionably sci-fi, while also creating a space in their televisual worlds where their representations of race are inherently tied to the concepts of the (il)legal alien. The willful styling of characters through phenotype and language become frequent complications of what it means to be alien and, at times, reorients the viewer's relationship to the characters of the show. Focusing on how the respective will to styles of Katz and Moore in their development of character based centrally on phenotype and language, this chapter will explore the often-overlooked notions of racial Otherness that occur in *The Event* and *Caprica*. Katz and Moore enact race as particular televisual devices that are used to drive both *The Event* and

Caprica and, in doing so, expose what Aldama calls in “Body Movements and Audience Emotions in Mira Nair’s Filmic Bombay,” a televisual “blueprint” that is “as deliberate and thought out as possible” and is meant to generate an “intensified reality” of their respective series (91, 93). As a way of better understanding how race and language function as blueprint elements in *The Event* and *Caprica*, I focus on Katz’s and Moore’s depictions of character (pheno)type and foreign language as “tools” (Aldama, 2009, 13) that expose Katz and Moore’s weak *will to style* when it comes to *extra* and *terrestrial* ethnoracial characterization. This chapter seeks to focus on Katz’s and Moore’s use of formal devices in the construction of race and ethnicity in the crafting of their respective televisual story- worlds. By exploring directorial reliance on phenotype and language in *Caprica* and *The Event*, I hope to enrich our understanding of how Katz and Moore employ a weak “will to style” that, rather un-futuristically or unimaginatively, perpetuates models of racial exclusion within their respective sci-fi storyworlds.

Along with the willful styling of storyworld space that directors rely on when creating SF storyworlds, the role of Chicanx and Latinx character within these spaces likewise take on new meaning when we consider the historic roles they have maintained and how such roles might be further complicated. This is not to say, however, that Chicanx and Latinx character have been completely absent from SF in films. In fact, director Robert Rodriguez, in films like *Planet Terror* and *Machete Kills* for example, explore the limits of SF’s relationships with Chicanx and Latinx characters, and even goes so far as to produce a false trailer (*Machete Kills In Space*) where the hero must battle galactic forces of evil in space.



Figure 5: Stills from Rodriguez’s trailer *Machete Kills Again: In Space* that introduces the titular character, played by Danny Trejo, as a light-saber machete wielding astronaut.

Ironically, while directors like Rodriguez are working to expand the roles of Chicanx and Latinx in in SF space, Aldama reminds us that “our existence, actions, and products are undeniably visible...we’re still oddly absent from mainstream Sci-Fi narrative fictions” (Latino Rising *xix*) that place us at the center of the action. This continued misuse becomes apparent when we examine the roles foisted upon viewers. By this I mean that, unfortunately, while SF has the capability to “open readers (and viewers) senses, thoughts, and feelings to new ways of being in the world” (Latino Rising), Chicanx and Latinx populations struggle to maintain sustained presences in SF storyworlds.

Before launching into the essay proper, let me offer some definitions of key concepts that I will use: science fiction, televisual realism and enstrangement. The definitions of Science Fiction (also known as Sci-Fi and SF) has been imagined and reimagined by scholars for quite some time. Darko Suvin for example, in “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre”, defines Science Fiction “as a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the authors empirical environment” (375). For Suvin SF exists only in

those locations that do not readily reflect an authors (and I would add directors) verifiable environments. Aldama, however, distills the definition of SF even further when he contends,

Sci-Fi narrative fiction is the distillation then *recreation* of a chosen slice of reality to *make new* perception, thought, and feeling. It is the making of a blueprint inclusive of mention of “**scientific knowledge**” that aims to create a new relational experiences between the subject (reader/viewer) and object (novel, comic book, film) (all emphasis original *xviii*)

For Aldama science fiction is a medium that attempts to make new our ways of engaging narrative, literary or otherwise. Moreover, the intended effect of SF for viewers and readers is not to only estrange or make strange, but to also introduce new ways of connecting with a given work.

Turning next to televisual realism, Jason Mittell notes that “[V]iewers regularly judge a program on whether it feels true to real life, expecting content to be believable and to relate to *their world*” (161 emphasis added). Yet, while many viewers may be attempting to relate their everyday present reality to the sci-fi worlds depicted in *Caprica* and *The Event*, as Mittell points out more generally, regardless of the degree of realism present “all television is inherently unrealistic” (161). Indeed, television is in many ways an intensification of reality. It is, as Mittell continues, “A version of the world that is more engaging than reality, even if it strives to feel realistic and true to life” (162). Pushing the concept of realism further, Torbin Grodal asserts that “[T]he core element in the sense of something being real is that it is a pragmatic feeling that involves a go signal to the embodied brain, just as the sense of unreality involves a stop signal” (250). It is this relationship with fiction that realism introduces to a given series, and that Katz and Moore complicate through the use of the phenotype and language.

The points of complication that realism introduces and that will be discussed in this essay lead to the second formal device explored in *Caprica* and *The Event*: the concept of *enstrangement*. Frederick Luis Aldama describes enstrangement as the use of devices in all aesthetic media that snaps us out of our habituation of the world and its objects, people included. That is, it is the use of formal devices such as, say, camera angle, lighting—or characterization—in a medium such as television (or film) that, he writes, “push at the boundaries of convention, to deviate unpredictably from aesthetic norms” (2009, 36). They do so to in a sense *wake* the audience to new ways of seeing the world and all that make up the world. Aldama remarks, “Authors (and I would add directors) can choose devices to make us look again *at* and *into* those objects to which we have habituated ourselves” (emphasis original 36). A director’s choice to focus on the ingredients of phenotype and language in their characterization *can* have the potential to have audiences “look again *at* and *into*” ethnoracialized characters in the televisual medium. Directors such as Katz and Moore have the choice to use greater or lesser degrees of the will to style in their characterization. Such choices determine whether or not the televisual viewer will look again *at* and *into* those who make up their storyworlds. I move now toward the exploration of how realism and enstrangement (or lack thereof) impact our understanding of *Caprica* and *The Event*.

Broadly, the concept of enstrangement has undergone extensive analysis in SF studies and English narrative studies since Shklovsky’s introduction of the term. For Shkolovsky, enstrangement, or *ostraniene* (xix), was a form of “prose...a tool of abstraction” (3) whereby readers engaged with a particular narrative can become desensitized to repetitive objects. As readers engaged narratives ripe with objects those objects end up “pass[ing] before us, as if its were prepackaged. We know that it exists because of its position in space, but we see only its

surface. Gradually, under the influence of this generalizing perception, the object fades away” (5). From Shklovsky’s vantage, readers, become habituated to narrative elements and, over time, begin to gloss over specific meanings and/or significances that authors and directors introduced as their narratives progressed. Thus, their “perception” according to Shklovsky “becomes habitual it becomes automatic” (Shklovsky, 1925). In order to combat habituated readings of literary fiction, Shklovsky focused his attention to those literary elements that end up “pricking the conscience” (3) of a reader and reorienting their gaze back to the text. These specific moments when a narrative was able to “return sensation to your limbs, in order to make us feel objects” (6) was considered the moment of estrangement. Through such literary moments readers are broken out of their habituation by a narrative act and begin to engage the narrative afresh, and which invite us to analyze narrative works afresh as well.

Broadly, the process of estrangement has not remained with Shklovsky. Specifically, Science Fiction studies and the English literature studies have, in fact, taken up the term and applied it to their respective areas of study. In the early 1970s sf scholar Darko Suvin broadly applied the parameters of estrangement when he identified SF literature as a “*literature of cognitive estrangement*” (emphasis original 372). Suvin defined cognitive estrangement as that “which allows us to reorganize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar” (374). Moreover, for Suvin “*SF is... a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement*” (emphasis original 375). However, I do wish to point out that a significant differentiation between Suvin and Shklovsky hinges on the idea of making new and of making strange. While both scholars desire to reorganize a reader’s orientation to a text, my interpretation of Shklovsky’s estrangement acknowledges an awareness of making new a reader’s engagement with narratives rather than making it unfamiliar. Benjamin Sher, in his

“Translator’s Introduction” to Shklovsky’s *Theory of Prose*, acknowledges the significance of this difference when he notes, “‘estrangement’ is good but negative and limited” because “they require no special effort of the imagination” (xix). From Sher’s vantage estrangement seeks to “expand and “complicate”” some readers “perceptual process” (xix) of a text. While Sher’s interpretation of enstrangement breaks from Suvin’s iterations of the term, the concept of enstrangement as defamiliarization in narrative studies likewise complicates the terms intended effects.

Introduced by Lemon and Reis in their 1965 translator’s introduction to *Russian Formalist Criticism Four Essays*, they contend that *ostraniene* as defamiliarization is a “critical formula that [can] define the difference between literature and non-literature more precisely and more generally than had been done” (4), and “is not so much a device as a result obtainable by any number of devices” by “making the familiar seem strange” (emphasis original 5). While Lemon and Reis’s definition appears to align with that of Suvin’s they readily admit that Shklovsky himself “did not follow this line” (5) of thinking, but it did not stop Lemon and Reis from introducing *ostraniene* and defamiliarization because it “widens the range of his theory” (5). Lemon and Reis’s translational influences are evident in the studies of the narrative fiction studies as well. In the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, for example, *ostraniene* is transliterated to “making strange”, and this process is dubbed defamiliarizaiton (98). Which bring me back to Aldama’s iterations of enstrangement as a literary element that attempts to “make new” a reader’s engagement with a particular narrative. This assertion stands in stark contrast to both SF and traditional narrative explorations of *ostraniene* and invites us to consider the many ways authors, and in this case directors work to make new rather than makes strange Chican@/Latin@ characters in television and film via specific elements like language and

phenotype.

Presented to viewers as the “prequel to *Battlestar Galactica*” (Porter, 198), Caprica city is constructed as an unrivaled technological center of progress and innovation. Moore highlights these willful stylizations through the visual uses of robot butlers, paper-thin computer interfaces, and holo-bands, a type of technology that when placed over the eyes like a pair of glasses generates a virtual world without moral limits. Living within this über-advanced society are the Tauron people. Moore stylizes the Taurons with a neo-noir feel through sociocultural elements such as the 1950s-style dress, dedication to “old world” family values, and outdated technologies that are situated in stark contrast to the technological epicenter of Caprica city. Moving from products to population, *Caprica* unabashedly introduces blonde-haired, blue-eyed Caprican CEO Daniel Graystone (played by Eric Stoltz), who is the head of the technological giant Graystone Industries, and Yoseph Adama (played by Esai Morales) a black-haired, brown-skinned attorney who, like Graystone, is living on Caprica, but unlike Graystone is introduced to audiences as a Tauron immigrant (Figure 1). Willfully styled as the series “leading families—the Graystones and Adamas—have upper-class social status, education, and charisma on their side, all traits of winners” (Porter, 197–198). Yet, however unintentionally, what seems to be overlooked is that these “leading families” present a phenotypic disparity that functions as televisual divisions on Caprica. As progressive as these families appear to be portrayed, an in-depth analysis of these leading families exposes a directorial “will to style” that, even with shared traits and a “share[d] tragedy—the loss of a daughter” (Porter, 198), relies on radicalized perceptions and practices to establish and perpetuate difference, separation, and subjugation throughout the series.



Figure 6: *Caprica*. Esai Morales as Yoseph Adama and Eric Stoltz as Daniel Graystone.

Moore's choice of Graystone as phenotypically white and Adama as phenotypically brown itself does not warrant much evaluative concern. Yet, if we consider Moore's *will to style* Graystone as the residential Caprican successfully living on his home planet and Adama as the foreign born, bilingual, legally residing Tauron, we begin to identify an "identity standard" or a "set of meanings people hold for themselves that defines 'what it means' to be who they are...as role occupants" (Peter J. Burke, 5). Working to better understand the potential impacts of these meanings, Lisa Garcia Bedolla states in "The Identity Paradox: Latino Language, Politics and Selective Dissociation" that "a person's physical characteristics (like, say, phenotype) make it impossible for them to 'shed' their identification" (266) and exist as other residential forms. Thus population groups like the Taurons become phenotypically dissociated from the majoritarian Caprican populations. Interestingly, as a way of attempting to insert a backstory, Moore presents viewers with a significant televisual point of separation between the Taurons and Capricans through Yosef Adama. Adama makes it a point to explain the extent of his differentiation from Capricans. Walking into his son William's bedroom, Adama begins to map

out for his Caprican- planet-born son a Tauron lineage that until now has been kept from him. Beginning the conversation by telling William, “I want you to know who you are,” Adama reveals to his son and viewers that he and his family “come from a long line of Tauron peasants who [knew] how to work the land and still stand proud” (#1.1). The more compelling piece of information that Adama provides his audience however is that their “family name is actually Adama” that he emphatically repeats “Adama” (#1.1). Calling it a “good, honorable Tauron name” (#1.1), the newly reintroduced father and son embrace one another and the magnitude of their new identity. Thus, through his willful styling of Adama, Moore relies on phenotypic markers to further project the concept of the Tauron alien inhabitants, and the Adama family, as foreigners.

Moore’s willful styling of Adama, and that of the Tauron population as large, has not gone undetected, “quite clearly the Taurons, including Yosef Adama are perceived as culturally inferior to the Capricans” (Porter, 212). In fact, throughout several episodes Taurons are frequently referred to as “stinking dirt eaters.” Aside from generating color divided families, Moore’s styling of the Graystones as the über-wealthy and the Adama’s as subordinate foreigners struggling to survive is consistent with Edward E. Telles and Edward Murgia’s assertions that a “light phenotypic group has more . . . advantages than the medium phenotypic group” (689). Thus, rather than project onto viewers a leading sci-fi family that seeks to blur phenotypic or social color lines, Moore chooses, sadly, to style *Caprica* within currently assumed identity and social standards among the Graystones and the Adama’s. Moore’s willful styling of the Graystone and Adama’s existing in a sci-fi space that is demarcated by phenotype is not the only twenty-first-century series to do so. A closer examination of NBC’S *The Event* also highlights how phenotype can function as a demarcating line of character subordination

even when that character is the president of the United States.

The Event's sci-fi storyline follows the twenty something Sean Walker (played by Jason Ritter). Walker spends much of the series searching for his kidnapped girlfriend Leila Buchanan (played by Sarah Roemer) while also working to uncover his relationship with human-looking extraterrestrials living in the United States. In this near-future set storyworld, the US president is Elias Martinez (played by Blair Underwood). First introduced through a musical medium, the televisual announcement of the president thoroughly highlights a directorial willfulness that Katz exudes to formulate relationships between the audience and Martinez. Close attention to Katz's willful styling of Martinez throughout the initial episode places him within similar parameters that the Adama's inhabit in Caprica City. Like the Adamas, Martinez introduces a sci-fi space in which phenotype functions as a subordinating televisual marker of differentiation and, perhaps more importantly, an ethnic identity that alienates him from both American residents and illegally residing extraterrestrials. Katz's willful styling of Martinez as phenotypically Black and racially Cuban American where a phenotype form of sci-fi Otherness that results in a significant and unique space of conversation if we, as critical readers, remain mindful of Bedollas's aforementioned assertion of one's inability to "shed" particular types of identification. Martinez's inability to shed his phenotypic identity highlights the assertions of Isiah Lavender III concerning the relationship that race has with sci-fi when, in *Race In American Science Fiction*, he writes that "[S]cience fiction often talks about race by not talk- ing about race" (7). Yet, Katz breaks from this tradition of racial muting in sci-fi with his deliberate styling of Martinez's racial/ethnic history within *The Events* storyworld. Rather than adhering to this line of sci-fi representation, Katz introduces into the storyworld of *The Event* an Afro-Latino president who, rather than hiding his *Latinidad* (Latino-ness) through- out the initial episode, is presented to

viewers as a character who fully embraces his ties to a Cuban past.

Katz's decision to willfully position Martinez as an Afro-Latino in the sci-fi storyworld of *The Event* complicates the rigid notions of race identification. Katz's constructed storyworld is one where racial/ethnic identities are tied to what constitutes legal, illegal, residential, and alien within US borders. Scholars such as Ruben G. Rumbaut speak to these perceptive implications of race when he claims that "[W]hat we call 'race' is largely the sociopolitical accretion of past intergroup contacts and struggles, which establish the boundaries and thus the identities of victors and vanquished, of dominant and subordinate groups, of 'us' and 'them'" (1). Yet Katz's styling of President Martinez complicates the very idea of sociopolitical accretion. The televisual contract he asks viewers to sign is one whereby we must acknowledge Martinez as an Afro-Latino; that is, the viewer must consider centrally what points of contact and struggle a character like President Martinez has experienced as Afro-Latino. Katz provides enough televisual space for the audience to fill the gaps in Martinez's biographical history: Viewers are told that his mother and father "had it rough back in Cuba" (#1.1). As the story unfolds, Katz uses occasional sound bites of information to complicate the viewer's sense of Martinez as of African (phenotype) and Latino (heritage) descent. That is, Katz asks viewers to experience certain moments of estrangement between the expectation of racial type (the actor Underwood as identifiably African American) and Martinez's televisual characterization as Afro-Latino.



Figure 7: *The Event*. Blair Underwood as President Martinez with family.

Katz's willful complicating of President Martinez's ethnoracial characterization is further obscured with the introduction of a foreign language—a device also used to enstrange the viewer's experience of characters in *Caprica*. Particular uses of language reveal yet another ingredient used by directors to establish specific viewer contracts with the various characters in *Caprica* and *The Event*. Indeed, Jason Mittell highlights the significant role that spoken language plays in television when he asserts in *Television and American Culture* that, "The combination of *written dialogue* and *vocal performance* is typically how most scripted series establish characters, advance narratives, and keep viewers engaged in programs" (emphasis added, 205). Later, and still speaking of vocal performances, Mittell posits that a character's "vocal expression" is "the primary use of language within television" (210). Salvador Vidal-Ortiz further notes that when using language as an ethnic/racial marker "Spanish has served as the vehicle for both establishing and preserving a (Latino) community cohesion and solidarity within the US during the last century" (2004, 256). However, Katz's decision to use Spanish only intermittently to tag the presence of President Martinez, much like that of the foreign language used by the Adamas, creates a storyworld in which un-translated Spanish works in an exclusive

rather than inclusive manner. Spanish is never fully woven into the storyline and therefore works in a subordinate position to English—much like Elias Martinez whose linguistic and ethnoracial markers tag him as the Other. (For more on the ideological underpinnings of the use of Spanish see the work of Lisa Garcia Bedolla and also Antonia Darder.)

The deliberate use of English as normative and Spanish or Tauron as non-normative by Katz through Martinez, respectively, functions as a televisual device that establishes certain expectations of their viewers. Katz's deliberate choosing to use an un-translated Spanish throughout the series functions as a reinforcement of linguistic Otherness. The majority of Anglophone viewers will experience a sense of alienation when they hear Martinez speak Spanish—the only main character to do so. Katz's desire for character/viewer distancing is most evident during Martinez's televisual introduction. Katz instigates the viewer's relationship to Martinez with a white lettered name "President Elias Martinez" on a totally black, void-like screen that appears to be zooming into the audience's televisual space. Interestingly, Katz also chooses to willfully bond the name of the president with a trumpet-driven, fast-paced salsa and merengue beat. Aside from the musical and textual relationship that Katz introduces, some of the president's first words are "*Feliz Cumpleanos, David*" (1.1). This deliberate styling through an audiovisual medium highlights Katz's desire to project President Martinez as one whose *Afro-Latinidad* (in this case, Cubanismo) is highlighted through the use of language. However, the use of Spanish also functions to distance the willfully styled, Spanish-speaking Martinez from the viewer.

The desire for a willful distancing through language is also quite evident in *Caprica* where Moore also stylizes language to identify otherness. Moore's willful styling of the initial or framing episode of *Caprica* readily turns and returns to uses of language as a way of further

establishing Adama and the Tauron population as a linguistic other on Caprica. Moore's way of concentrating on the significance of languages in the series is through the willful juxtaposition of Yosef and his brother Sam. As an unassimilated Tauron living on Caprica, Sam Adama is frequently "depicted in straightforward style" and "abides by its culture, as well his Tauron roots, making him doubly culturally Other from mainstream Caprican society" (Porter 204, 212). Throughout the initial episode, Moore styles Sam as the constant cultural compass who constantly reminds his brother of where he came from, calls him by his Tauron name Yosef, and constantly challenges Adama's Tauron roots. More importantly, however, Sam freely speaks the Tauron language, and belittles his brother who chooses to speak Caprican English. Moore's insertion of a foreign language into the televisual blueprint of *Caprica*, while attempting to introduce audiences to an identity rooted in a foreign Tauron-centered space, also inherently begins to "chang[e] something whole," in this case a monolingual Caprican English that audiences have been navigating "into a fragment" (Aldama, 126) of understanding that enstranges audiences who are working to piece the framework of the initial episode together through their accessible association of language.

Quite consistently, Moore creates characters in the Adama brothers and the bilingual Tauron population that establish layers of meaning that viewers are invited to internalize as a foreign fiction they must work through in order to better understand the Tauron presence on Caprica. Moore's styling of an English/Tauron language dichotomy that necessitates translation creates a Caprican storyworld that allows "authors and readers (monolingual or otherwise) worldwide to invent, imagine, and vicariously experience other world authors' fictional landscapes" (Aldama, 2008, 125). In Moore's case, as the directorial author of the series, the use of language establishes a willful direction toward a fragmented fictional landscape, or blueprint,

that invites its televisual readers to engage with as well. For Moore, the willful styling of the Adamas as a bilingually foreign language-speaking “first family,” like phenotype, becomes yet another audiovisual marker of otherness that is placed into the character make-up of the Adamas and Tauron population. Considering the implications that the projection of character bilingualism can have on audiences, sociologist Lisa Garcia Bedolla considers the significant role that language plays in relational interactions (in our case, the relationship between the series and the viewer) when she notes in *Fluid Borders: Latino Power, Identity and Politics in Los Angeles* that “groups communicate, develop feelings of solidarity and preserve group histories through language” (63). So while Moore’s does present a will to style in the characterization of the Taurons within the Caprican storyworld, one that arguably creates a sense of solidarity among the fictional group, the weak will to style present in the use of foreign (albeit translated) language potentially fragments the reception and interpretation viewers may establish with the televisual Taurons. Thus the Taurons are further established as the televisual other.

Having worked to show how Katz and Moore have incorporated phenotype and language through President Martinez and the Adamas, and having discussed what kind of impacts such incorporations can have between the series and its viewers, I would like to consider how the different degrees present of the will to style impact the televisual concepts of realism in both series. Considering phenotype, Mittell notes that “[O]ne noticeable element of most television programs is the physical appearance of performers When performers deviate from such cultural norms, programs tend to acknowledge such body types as abnormal” (181). Later, Mittell claims that a “television performer works to create a compelling bond with viewers through both *vocal* and *physical* performances” (emphasis added 182). Yet, this essay has worked to show that sociologists and film scholars have noted that phenotype, almost like

paratexts that “have the capacity to inflect the way we interpret a narrative, sometimes powerfully” (Abbott, 239), is a willful styling that comes with its own set of implications that the directors must account for in their work. In the end, Elias Martinez and the Adama’s present viewers with alternative expectations of vocal and physical performances that they must navigate if they are to form the bond Mittell mentions. This decisive moment would be what Grodal referred to as the go signal and stop signal. That is, because of Katz and Moore’s willful styling of Elias Martinez and the Adamas as phenotypic and linguistic deviations from sci-fi expectations, viewers are placed in a space where they are to decide whether the show’s projection of realism is effective enough to get them to “return for the next episode” (Mittell, 182).

While much of the time has been spent exploring how *The Event* and *Caprica* have worked to draw audiences into their respective series through the enstranging of language and phenotype, it should be briefly noted that language and phenotype might likewise *estrangle* or alienate viewers; that is, push viewers away from engaging with both series. Considering the uses of phenotype as a form of racial (Afro-Cuban and Tauron) identification in both series, inherently establish complications, in that the uses of “multiracial individuals challenge society’s traditional notions and assumptions about race because they cannot be easily placed into any society’s preexisting racial categories” (Spickard qtd. by Shih et al. 125). Thus, by having to initially work through Martinez and the Adama’s phenotype, audiences become estranged, or alienated (so to speak), from the series’ main characters as they struggle to connect with Martinez or the Adamas. Likewise, language may itself elicit estranging motivations from audiences. Too often, “American national identity requires English monolingualism” as the primary form of linguistic communication “because speaking another language has often been seen as a sign of allegiance

to another nation or culture and thus antithetical to being a ‘true’ American” (Bedolla, 65). That said, both *The Event* and *Caprica* use foreign language and phenotype devices to turn viewing audiences’ expectations of their “Latino” characters upside down. Indeed, we begin to see how phenotype and language devices work as tools that can draw viewing audiences into, rather than away from, a particular series.

This decisive point at which audiences’ perceptions of realism have been complicated is also the space where the process of enstrangement has taken place. Recall that Aldama describes enstrangement as a director’s willful reorientation of a viewer’s gaze or observation through a particular device within a narrative. For Katz and Moore, the uses of phenotype and language in *Caprica* and *The Event*, while complicating viewers’ sci-fi expectations, work to estrange their relationship to the characters. That is, through phenotype and language, Katz and Moore work to reorient the viewers’ expectations of how should Afro-Latino look and sound like, or how even the uses of foreign language and skin color of the residents on alien planets can still generate racist and bigoted expressions and subordination. Unfortunately, such enstrangements do not function in such a way that the Adamas and Elias Martinez are projected in a more televisual positive reorientation. By the end of the series, President Martinez has been styled as a “weak” president, who makes a series of mistakes, and is ultimately viewed as the primary reason for the impending arrival of a whole planet of extraterrestrials who have been advised to come by the illegally living aliens. Likewise, by the end of *Caprica*, the Adamas, and by extension Tauron populations, are still considered second-class citizens, and are never styled as superior or equal to Capricans. The only glimpses of hope that viewers are left with is the introduction of the Caprican-born infant Bill Adama, who later becomes a commander in *Battlestar Galactica*.

These particular glimpses of hope for viewers, however, are unable to overcome the

recycled projections that perpetuate stereotypical ideals concerning the roles of Chicanx and Latinx characters. Rather than make new viewers ideas about how Chicanxs and Latinxs can indeed save the world, characters like Elias Martinez, the Adama's and the Graystones maintain western, earth bound ideals concerning issues of power and control via phenotype and language. And instead of using their directorial platforms to] "speak across differences of class, structural placement, racialization, national identity, gender" (Romero & Habell-Pallán 4) and the like in SF spaces, both Katz and Moore continue produce series that perpetuate stereotypes that have been criticized for decades. Instead of working to make new viewers ideas about Afro-Latinos and bilingual Latinx paralleled characters during a time when "the topic of color" has "played an important role in the segregation or assimilation of certain Latino groups" (Romero & Habell-Pallán 5) in the US, they continue to regurgitate discriminatory tropes. In the end rather than present viewers with alternative storyworlds where Latinx and Latinx identified character win the day and make new what it means to be Chicanx and Latinx by producing "relational experiences between object and viewer" as Aldama defined, we continue to function as the illegal Other trying to make room on the small screen.

Thus, although Katz and Moore willfully style spaces where phenotype and language have the potential to function as markers of eventual equality, they ultimately project a "window on the real world" (Grodal, 251), where science fictional subjugation is still evident and even acted upon. Ultimately, Katz and Moore had the choice to willfully style their respective television shows in such a way that they could have taken on "the cultural task of science fiction to draw attention to and challenge racist attitudes in part by interrogating science discourse" (Lavender III, 15). Instead, however, by working their series through two formal devices such as realism and enstrangement, we see that their willful styling of President Elias Martinez and the Adamas

perpetuate Lavenders assertions that “sf has mirrored rather than defied racial stereotypes through- out much of its history” (14). And after both shows were canceled, *The Event* due to ratings and *Caprica* due to a writers’ strike, we wait for an sci-fi world where the aforementioned issues become nonexistent. We wait for an SF storyworld that seeks to estrange their viewing audiences with the hopes and goals of reimagining what a Chicanx and Latinx characters are like in intergalactic situations.

CHAPTER 3

Paratextual Reimaginings of Chicanx/Latinx Characters in *DjangoZorro* and *Red Wolf*

“Some people chose different ways to take a stand, getting degrees in history and writing academic treaties on Chicano studies and history...I decided to go with the comic book”

-Laura Molina-

In chapter two of the graphic novel *DjangoZorro*, readers are introduced to the child called Conchita, a “mere peasant...an orphan” Yaqui girl who becomes a “very special” individual for the graphic novels villain Gerko Langdon. While Conchita plays a unique and significant role in progression the narrative of *DjangoZorro*, I argue in this chapter that elements of her character construction, like her phenotypic rendering by Brennan Wagner and cultural ascription by writers like Quentin Tarantino and Mat Wagner, make new for readers how they and we are to consider issues of race, culture, privilege, and oppression. Throughout this chapter I will show how the artistic rendering of Conchita’s phenotypic metamorphosis becomes a direct reflection of the influence of Spanish European colonization upon indigenous peoples. Thus, by following the artistic renderings of Conchita in *DjangoZorro* readers can identify the impact “the finest schools of Madrid” have had in transforming Conchita into “a true lady in the most honored Spanish tradition” (Issue 2 pg3). Moreover, by attending to the issue of phenotype in relation to the overall narrative, I contend that Conchita’s phenotypic transformation and the oppression of and subsequent struggle with phenotype complicates the role of narrative paratextual analysis and introduces new ways of understanding a narrative term that remains on the fringes (pun intended) of narrative analysis. Before diving headlong into my analysis, however, I feel it is necessary to ground my analytical approach and introduce some key terms, or “intellectual tools”, that help us “articulate what [readers] understand, or think they understand, when...processing a narrative artifact” (Bal 4) like *DjangoZorro*, and to speak, in brief, about the

significance of reading these issues through a graphic/comic medium.

Until recently, the engagement of comics and graphic novels within the academy has not necessarily gained much approval. Today however, “the comic book medium has steadily gained greater credence in academia” (Aldama 1). In fact, when we consider comics and graphic novels as a narrative medium of communication Aldama contends, “[T]he comic storytelling medium is especially attractive to Latino makers of narrative fiction and nonfiction”, because “it offers a variety of tensions and harmonies between its visual and verbal ingredients” (1). Moreover, Jesper Nielsen and Søren Wichmann have argued that, historically, comic and graphic novels in relation to Latino populations can be dated as far back as “the Pre-Columbian Mixtecs of the 14th to 16th century Mexico” (59) via “Mixtec codices”. According to Nielsen and Wichmann Mayan painters and communicators were acutely aware that “the combination of text and image offered unique possibilities for relating series of events” (60) to their readers. In fact, Nielsen and Wichmann go as far as to suggest that for “Maya artists,...the combination of text and image was the most expressive and hence preferred kind of communication” (62) in Pre-Columbian communities. Thus, it is no far stretch to contend that the study of Latino comics-their coloration, their narrative progressions and structures, framing, character constructions, etc.-readily lend themselves to focused examination. Moreover, in focusing on the Yaqui character Conchita this chapter seeks to maintain the threads of the Pre-Columbian efforts to communicate narratives via text-image.

Beginning, then, with an interdisciplinary framework for engaging the Yaqui Spanish-speaking character Conchita, I return to post-classical narrative theory. Historically termed narratology, the study of narratologies or postclassical narrative theory afford us the opportunities to explore the many structures that go into the telling of a story, graphic novels and comics

included. In fact, David Herman, in *Narratologies*, notes, “*narratology* has in fact ramified into *narratologies*; structuralist theorizing about stories has evolved into a plurality of models for narrative analysis”, that, although “borrow[s] more or less extensively from the analytic heritage” (1), which continue to push on the boundaries and limits of narrative analysis. Aside from the growth narratology is undergoing in literary studies, the tools of narrative theory are creating inroads of influence in other areas of study like comics and graphic novels. Susana Onega and José Angel García Landa, in *Narratology: An Introduction* postulate, for example, a multidisciplinary study of narrative which negotiates and incorporates the insights of many other critical discourses that involve narrative forms of representation” (1). For Chicanx/Latinx Studies scholars the historical, political, fictional, and social narratives that comprise our research areas become rich locations of analysis that, in turn, offer new ways of engaging and understanding how we approach, consume and critique these narratives.

This idea of narrative theory as a multidisciplinary form of analysis is further articulated by Herman and Jared Gardner who, in “Graphic Narratives and Narrative Theory: Introduction”, introduce the term graphic narrative theory, which they use as a “short hand for the new, hybridized field of study in which...narrative theory can be brought to bear on graphic narratives, and how, reciprocally, the richness and complexity of narratives told in words and images might pose challenges to existing models of story” (3). Herman and Gardner’s ideas about graphic narrative theory brings us back to Conchita and Daniela, and the driving questions they produce. I believe that through these leading characters presented to readers via words and images we can challenge or complicate our current models of paratextual narratives analysis. By this I mean that if paratext is a narrative element that attempts to frame a reader’s engagement with a story, even from within, what do we make of the visual elements of a specific

character in comics and graphic novels? How might we complicate the ideas of paratext in graphic novels and comics when we examine the color(ing) of a character, or phenotype? How might phenotype affect and complicate our larger understanding of paratextual analysis? Moreover, what is made new or estranged during these phenotypic changes?

Historically, the role of color in comics as it relates to character of color has played a crucial role for authors seeking to willfully style a particular storyworld. In *Super Black: American Pop Culture and Black Superheroes* Adilifu Nama, speaks directly to such issues when he calls attention to “black superheros...as a racial phenomenon...and a powerful source of racial meaning, narrative, and imagination in American society that expresses a myriad of racial assumptions, political perspectives, and fantastic (re)imaginings of black identity” (3). Moreover, Nama understands black superhero as American “cultural ciphers” (3) that offer readers richer modes of analysis and understanding. For Nama the black phenotypic presentation of superhero like the Black Panther and Luke Cage offer rich areas of analysis that complicate comic book storyworlds for readers because, among other things, they complicate perceived ideals of heroism in comic book storyworlds. In fact, when discussing the role of color in comic books Scott McCloud goes so far as to concede, “colors **objectify** their subjects. We (readers/viewers) more aware of the **physical form** of objects than in **black and white**” (bold original 189). Color, then, also functions as a visual invitation for readers to look at and dwell upon those elements that are made new by their coloration.

Shifting these observation practices to characters like Conchita or Daniela, phenotype functions as a cipher for issues of culture, history, and the role of power, control, or the lack thereof as they relate to whiteness, and which have maintained a significant area of study in the social sciences as they relate to race in the U.S. Margaret Shih et. al have noted that although

“race does not exist outside of our social world” (125), it nevertheless “plays an important role...and is used to divide people into groups, and these groups are associated with differing levels of status, disparities in access to resources, and discrepancies in achievement” (132). This grouping process based on race is made evident throughout *DjangoZorro* and *Red Wolf*, and speaks to the broader implications of Chicanx/Latinx representations. For characters in graphic novels then, the process of character objectification via their phenotypic presentations to readers creates contracts of expectations in relation to their social spaces. In other words, when readers engage a particular character the color of that character inflects certain, specific expectations for better or worse. For characters like Conchita and Daniela phenotype becomes a racial marker that inherently carries histories of cultural and social oppressions, mistreatment, and struggles with power as it relates to color. These implications bring us back to my initial questions.

These questions are important because, as this chapter will highlight, bodies of color inherently present narratives that shape our reading engagements and exist as a frame of reference outside of or aside from verbal cues. As we’ll soon see, Conchita’s coloration and presentation, although never explicitly mentioned in the graphic novel, identifies culture, history, colonization, and struggles with identity that frame a readers’ engagement with her throughout the comic. Furthermore, I believe that Conchita’s phenotypic progression enstranges our readings of bodies of color, and invites us to reconsider the role of phenotype in comics and graphic narratives. In the broader scope of narrative studies, I believe that Conchita’s phenotypic progressions afford us the opportunity to examine the embedded narratives that bodies of color present and expand the study of paratextual analysis, because paratext as a tool of analysis is often relegated to the study of book jackets, and titles. By examining the textual framing phenotype creates in comics through the textual/visual relationship to convey a narrative I

contend that Conchita presents a new way of understanding the parameters of paratext as a narrative tool of analysis in graphic novels and comics. These examinations would establish inroads of continued analysis that expands our current understanding of narrative theory practices by refitting our frames of paratextual analysis to include comic characters as frames of analysis within a particular work.

Speaking more directly to the identification of paratext within the spaces of communicative sharing, H. Porter Abbott, defines narrative as “*the representation of an event or a series of events*” (*emphasis original* 13). For Abbott narrative relies on identifying a something that “happens” (13). The conveyance of this happening, or representation of this happening results in a narrative. Outside the pages of these bound happenings, paratext becomes a term that aids a scholars understanding of how narrative happenings are framed for the readers that engage them. Paratext is defined as “material outside the narrative that is in some way connected to it...:(i.e.) prefaces, tables of contents, titles, blurbs on the jacket, illustrations” (Porter Abbott 239). So although it is not the event itself, paratext nevertheless functions as an introduction point of narrative engagement that shapes our understanding of the texts we read. Paratext also has “the capacity to inflect the way we interpret a narrative, sometimes powerfully. ...[W]e can see paratextual material in the form of playbills, previews, marquees, public disclaimers production scandals, notoriety of the actors” (239). Moving outside the realm of the narrative, per se, but clinging to the multidisciplinary of narrative studies, I briefly turn to social science explorations of phenotype as a frame of social referencing within homosapien, US American communities. Phenotype, which is defined as “the act of assigning value... according to skin color” (Montalvo & Codina 322) offers a unique, and enriching element to narrative comic studies in that it affords a point of analysis that is not as readily available in text only narratives.

By this I mean that while text only narratives offer, at times, phenotypic representations of their characters through descriptive language or style, comics and graphic novels present readers with individuals that, in our case, are phenotypically colored in specific and directional ways, and which change after their encounters with Europe, education, and upward class mobility. While these phenotypic changes may, at first glance, appear rather insignificant, Political Scientist Lisa Garcia Bedolla, in “The Identity Paradox: Latino Language, Politics and Selective Dissociation”, reminds us that “a person’s physical characteristics (like phenotype) make it impossible for them to ‘shed’ their identification” (266) and exist as phenotypic others, and which creates a “racialized identity” (266) within social communities. Conchita’s racialized identity thus become a topic of focused analysis when her phenotype undergoes a whitening process over time, distance and European education. The process of making Conchita phenotypically lighter by the end of issue/chapter 2 in *DjangoZorro* should not be overlooked by scholars and audiences as a mere process of coloration. In fact, this phenotypic progression points to a moment of narrative estrangement for readers and scholars who become aware of the process and work to understand how Conchita’s struggle makes new our awareness of color as a frame of identification in graphic novels and comics. Estrangement, a Russian formalist term coined by Viktor Shklovsky, is a process in which authors “push at the boundaries of convention, to deviate unpredictably from aesthetic norms” (2009, 36). They do so to in a sense *wake* the audience to new ways of seeing the world and all that make up the world. Frederick L. Aldama remarks, in *A User’s Guide to Latino and Postcolonial Borderlands Fiction*, that “Authors (and I would add directors) can choose devices to make us look again *at* and *into* those objects to which we have habituated ourselves” (emphasis original 36). For readers, then, estrangement is a narrative experience whereby authors move away from conventional movements and norms and

attempt to make new a readers' engagement of a given text. Thus, when we couple phenotype and paratext in comics we see that through the analysis of comic and graphic novel characters like Conchita phenotype is a visual form of paratext that ultimately frames a reader's engagement with that character, and includes those moments when that particular character's phenotype, in this case Conchita over narrative time and space, is affected by and begins to reflect evidence of European oppression via her unique coloration.

While this assertion is significant, I understand that, traditionally, paratext has been understood as a narrative element that exists outside of a narrative proper, but can still have a profound influence on a reader's engagement with said narrative. Scholars like David Gorman, in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of the Narrative Theory*, do push on the paratextual boundaries further when he includes "titles and subtitles (of chapters, sections, and volumes as well as the whole work) (419). What is striking about Gorman's expansion of the term is his inclusion of work that can be found *within* a given text. For Gorman, paratext is not bound to the exterior of a narrative, but includes those elements that frame a preceding book chapter. What I find fascinating, however, is that if we take a term like paratext and apply it to comic books and graphic novels we run into an interesting conundrum. You see, while traditional literary narratives rely solely on word text to convey meaning and establish narrative progression, "only in comics" as Aldama puts it, "does the reader infer and decode meaning from both the shape of the visual and the shape of the verbal elements" (6). Similarly, Charles Hatfield's explorations about "communication by text and communication by images" in *Alternative Comics*, have led him to conclude that when it comes to comic art the combination of narrative language and narrative image, "is a form of writing" with its own "signifying codes and practices" (33). What both Hatfield and Aldama reinforce for us as critical readers about comics is that language *and*

image work in concert to tell a story. Having one without the other would significantly alter readers' interpretations thereby changing the narrative as a whole. We therefore must be mindful that if paratext is a narrative element that attempts to frame a reader's engagement with a story even from within, the visual elements of character in comics and graphic novels introduce new areas of analysis for scholars. Moreover, the impact of phenotype inherently colors (pun intended) how readers understand characters. This brings me back to one of my initial questions. How might phenotype affect and complicate our larger understanding of paratextual analysis? To answer these questions, I turn to Conchita.



Figure 8: Conchita

Introduced in chapter two of *DjangoZorro*, Conchita is textually introduced to readers before we are able to see her visual construction. Asking the question, “<Why are you **doing** that>” (1), as the opening page ends, readers turn the page and immediately find out two key elements of Conchita's construction. First, we find out, via conversations with her questions respondent that the < used in her question represent a language foreign to her respondent, which is, in this case, Spanish. Secondly, when we are introduced to the visual character of Conchita we see that she has been constructed in very specific ways that, as her narrative progresses become markers of difference, change, the gain and removal of power. By paying attention to Conchita in relation to

her coloration throughout the graphic novel, we begin to see that colorist Brennan Wagner relies on shading and coloring to queue reader's responses to Conchita. This type of analysis, according to Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey, is called "graphiation" and "can be read as a neologism for "visual enunciation" or "graphic expression," refers to the fact that the hand and the body-as well as the whole personality of the artist-is visible in the way he or she gives a visual representation of a certain object, character, setting, or event" (137). By this Baetens and Frey highlight that, however limited, the artist/colorist makes deliberate choices in the construction of their character and their relation in the overall arch of a specific narrative.

Turning to artist Brennan Wagner's visual introduction of Conchita we see that she is constructed as a phenotypically brown girl in the same fashion as identified indigenous Yaqui characters in subsequent issues of the *DjangoZorro* series. Conchita's description by an unnamed character as a peasant orphan who is raised by the village and sleeps in haylofts and runs wild in the street, along with her coloration present to readers a specific characterization. Through specific uses of color Wagner associates and ascribes onto the young Conchita a population group, a history, a geographic location, and indigenous identity that has suffered at the hands of European Spanish oppressors over hundreds of years. Through Conchita readers also identify a phenotypic differentiation between her and Arlic, the little boy that opens issue two. This phenotypic introduction is significant when we remember that, according to scholars like Frank Montalvo and G. Edward Codina, "Skin colors seen as the most salient and distinctive feature that is used to mark members as belonging to one race or another" (321).

The role of color in comics has also maintained a growing academic following. Comic artist and scholar Scott McCloud, in *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, reminds readers that when it comes to comics "color has been a powerful, even predominant concern of fine

artists everywhere” (285), and invites readers to become “more aware of the physical form of objects” (189) they engage when reading comics. Moreover, McCloud contends that “when used well, color...can...amount to far more than the sums of its parts” (192). When considering the role of color from a strictly comic perspective, then, the deliberate construction of Conchita as a phenotypically colored individual invites readers to become more aware of her physical construction in relation to other characters throughout the graphic novel. By this I mean that for a colorist like Wagner color, in this case phenotype, is used to heighten our awareness of Conchita’s particular narrative. Furthermore, when exploring and engaging Conchita’s phenotype we should be mindful that Wagner presents a particular narrative that also invites us to consider far more than what is presented on the page like, for example, the role and function of Conchita’s color/phenotype throughout the entire narrative. What cannot be discounted, however, and what I will continue to stress throughout this chapter is the eminent role color has, in part, in shaping the overall narrative trajectory in *DjangoZorro*.

The colored differentiation between Conchita and Arlic identify a very clear distinction that reinforces what Sociologist Peter Burke calls an “identity standard” whereby readers acknowledge a “set of meanings people hold for themselves that defines what it means to be who they are...as role occupants” (165). These direct visualizations of character phenotype remind us that “the graphic novel brings us healthily back upon our feet, confronting us with characters...that we see see before our eyes”, and that push to consider how these “bodies” with their phenotypic differentiations shape our engagements of *DjangoZorro*. This “emphasis on the body not only has a strong impact on the audience’s interaction with the medium but also affects the analysis of the graphic novel itself” (Baetens and Frey 175). What this means for us as scholars is that character constructions -i.e. their coloration or phenotype, their narrative arch,

their histories, etc.- play a significant role in creating a specific, deliberate narrative. So by following the narrative construction of Conchita via phenotype we are able to make new our reading of DjangoZorro by enriching the depth of engagement for both scholars and audiences.

Taking these observations and examining Conchita's phenotype as a paratextual identifier, we immediately read Conchita as a "brown" girl who is then juxtaposed with a phenotypically white boy. And I'd like to point out briefly that while this could have been an opportunity for the writers (visual and verbal) to challenge this trope by complicating ideas of phenotype and power between these two characters, the comic, unfortunately, perpetuates traditional mores. Conchita's phenotype is, however, not a static issue. In fact, as we follow Conchita's narrative phenotype likewise undergoes unique changes that, through the process of whitening or *blanqueamiento* highlight the influences of Spanish European colonization.



Figure 9: Conchita receives her new name

Looking to the above panel we see that Conchita, yet again, is juxtaposed with another white figure. Moreover, this individual, Gurko Langdon, is an Albanian who, working to nefariously acquire Arizona lands, becomes Conchita's patron, and ships her off to Spain so that she can

attend “the finest schools of Madrid”, and ultimately become “a true lady in the most honored Spanish tradition” (#2 6). Moreover, Conchita is given a new name, a Spanish name. Conchita is now Consuela Ave Maria de Peralta de Cordoba. Along with her new name, readers can identify the process of *blanqueamiento* that Conchita appears to undergo as she begins her voyage to Spain. Like her name though, the *blanqueamiento* will take time for her to fully embrace, and her struggle is drawn onto her identity. While in Spain, Consuela does, in fact, attend the best schools with her Patron’s son Arlic. Readers learn so after her voyage to Spain that she and Arlic struggle with the Spanish language and are constantly accosted for it. Yet Conchita perseveres, and by the end of issue two readers and the narrative world of Arizona are reintroduced to Consuela. The perceived effects of Spain’s European education and lifestyle, however, have once again affected Conchita’s phenotype. This time, however Conchita’s phenotype is not shaded in parts, but reflects her educational growth, and, I would argue, the influences of Spanish Europe fully, and completely. Conchita is now Consuela. The influences of European oppression are refracted through her.



Figure 10: Consuela Ave Maria de Peralta de Cordoba back in the United States

Observing the visual process of Conchita's phenotypic change we can see the effects of Spanish education have incited changes on her physical self. The identification of Conchita's phenotypic changes in chapter 2 invite us to consider how such changes can be read in relation to her past, her present, and how the uses of colors on her body change throughout the graphic novel. Conchita's fluctuating phenotype also enstrange our understanding of historical interpretations of Yaqui, Mexican, and Spanish relationships in the late 19th century via Conchita's phenotypic fluctuations throughout the graphic novel and ultimately create a richer, more complex narrative. The ethnic/cultural identifiers colored onto Conchita acknowledges the historical struggle many indigenous and/or Mexican individuals experienced along the borderlands during the mid and late 19th century. In fact, although Conchita is introduced as a harmless child early in chapter two, she is nevertheless considered a "wild" (chapter 2) child who "runs the streets." Olivia Gall, in her article "Identidad, exclusión y racismo: reflexiones teóricas y sobre México", notes how indigenous individuals, like Conchita were considered nothing more than a "problema indio... del Estado Mexicano" (243) and Anglo residents living along the Mexican-Arizona border. To complicate matters further, as a Spanish speaking Yaqui orphan Conchita's struggle is doubly weighted and accounts for another maker of narrative construction that enstranges our reading of *DjangoZorro*.

In issue three of the series readers are introduced to a another form of oppression, this time however, the oppression is introduced via the policing of language. Having been brought up in the finest European schools Conchita is forced by her patron turned husband Langdon, to speak only English in the ducal Palace, because, as Langdon points out, "the **Manifest Destiny** of North America is **English!**" (emphasis original chapter 3). However, the role and use of Spanish in *DjangoZorro* also works to shape the reader's engagement of a character like Conchita. For

example, Aldama reminds us in *Your Brain on Latino Comics: From Gus Arreola to Los Bros. Hernandez* that often times comic and graphic writers use language to “let us know” that a particular character is “Latino” by their use of language. Moreover, Lourdes Torres, in her article “In the Contact Zone: Code Switching Strategies by Latino/a Writers” studies “the alternation of two languages in a verbal or written text” (76), or code-switching as she defines it. For Torres, the “writers who use Spanish in their work continue to impact the literary sphere and to a lesser or greater extent insist on documenting and textualizing the reality of a multilingual” (77) readership. Tarantino and Wagner’s deliberateness of mixing Spanish and English and its intended effect on readers is further highlighted by comic artist and scholar Scott McCloud who notes, “cartoonists have evolved an artful, sophisticated dance between words and pictures which emphasize each one’s strengths, but also strives, whenever possible to find the perfect balance” (128).

Thus, the brief intermixing of Spanish and English that Conchita utilizes in *DjangoZorro*, along with the intermittent uses of Spanish throughout the entire graphic novel underscore a location of resistance and differentiation from a dominant Anglo America that is bent on manifesting its destiny as far as it possibly can and makes new for its readers the role Spanish language has in progressing the overall narrative. Furthermore, scholars like Salvador Vidal-Ortiz note that “speaking two languages, or speaking English “with an accent” invariably influences notions of what it means to be a citizen” (254) of a particular population group. Vidal-Ortiz goes on to contend that to speak Spanish is as “an act of “resistance to full assimilation” (255) into that particular group. In Conchita’s case her Spanish is seen as the marker of resistance against the American driven manifest destiny Langdon strives to maintain in his ducal palace. When we pair the role of phenotype and language, then, Conchita at once

becomes a visual/literary character whose physical body and use of language become a site of struggle and resistance. Such struggles are encapsulated in the subsequent panel, and underscores the significance of both visual/verbal role of a graphic novel.

Relying on what McCloud calls an “Intersecting Panel” which he defines as “words and pictures working together in some respects while also contributing information independently” (130), readers are confronted with a series of resistances and oppressions that invite us to reconsider how we engage both phenotype and language. Moreover, the intersecting panel below becomes the marked site of a historical struggle with language, oppression, and marginalization on the page via her phenotypic presentation. Turning to the following panel we see a trifecta of color splash on Conchita's face. While this use of color might be understood as an artistic freedom Wagner chooses to use in constructing Conchita it should be pointed out that as a character Conchita, is an indigenous Yaqui woman, who was brought up speaking Spanish and is now forced to speak English. What this panel suggests, then, is the visual acknowledgment of this very struggle. If we return then to McCloud's idea that color can amount to more than the sum of its parts, the intermixed color splashed across Conchita's face invites us to critically examine the sum of Wagner's decision. Using both color and word bubble, the panel below identifies for readers a character whose struggle with Spanish European oppression has been colored onto her face. By this I mean that while Conchita was painted in a totalizing lighter color at the end of issue two, her struggle to find her own voice apart from the patron who is now her husband in issue three are made evident on her visage. To make the point much clearer, Conchita confesses that her use of Spanish was a “careless” (#3 15) linguistic mistake, rather than a struggle. The phenotypic kaleidoscope colored onto her character says otherwise.



Figure 11: Consuela struggles with language

Torres places the use of Spanish and Spanglish by Latino/a writers at the center of analysis. Contending that when authors use Spanish and/or Spanglish as one of their many narrative “strategies” (76), it represents a “a culturally specific Latinidad” that seeks to “challenge monolingualism” (79), Torres identifies narrative locations whereby Spanish and Spanglish function as markers of cultural identification that invite further explication. Taking Torres’ observations into account, and considering the many ways authors seek to engage readers, the role of Spanish and Spanglish become key points of consideration. Fellow sociolinguist Lisa Garcia-Bedolla echoes similar sentiments regarding language when she notes, “language is the means with which ethnic groups communicate, develop feelings of solidarity and preserve group histories” (265)–. For both Torres and García-Bedolla the use of Spanish carries significant points of relation for Spanish speaking, bilingual individuals living within a U.S. American location where English is widely considered the predominant language. Moreover, for Torres Spanish and Spanglish in literature can be used by authors as a way of establishing a unique linguistic and cultural connection for a “segment of the population...living between cultures and languages” (76) like Chicanos and Latinos living in the U.S.

Unfortunately, Chicanxs and Latinxs existing ‘between cultures’ within the United States, in general, is not a novel issue. Since the late 1960s and early 70s resistance to their social,

economic, and political marginalization within the U.S. has been championed by scholars like Carlos Muñoz and Raymond Rocco. What Torres' article does introduce, however, is the significant impact language has in shaping our understanding of Chicano/Latino literature as it relates to production, and a minority population; in this case Latino readers. Much like Chicano/Latino marginalization, the emphasis on language alone is not inherently unique to this essay. Jonathan Culler, in *Literary Theory: A Very Short Guide*, dedicates an entire chapter to theoretical approaches, meaning making, analysis, and engagement of language in literature. While much of his analysis centralizes on monolingual linguistic analysis, he nevertheless concedes that "different languages divide up world differently" (59), but does not give much consideration for those narratives that are comprised of a *remezcla* of languages like Spanish, English, and Spanglish. And this is where Torres' initial observations of Chicano/Latino narratives offer up a unique intervention that I will push further in this essay. The remainder of this chapter will first parse out Chicano/Latino mixed language identifications that scholars, like Torres, have begun to identify in both social and literary spaces.. It is my belief that Torres' observations surrounding the varying degrees of Spanish and Spanglish use in Chicanx/Latinx literature, when placed alongside postclassical narrative theory, establishes a unique literary intervention in narrative studies in which bilingual language and minority culture become essential narrative components for communicating to readers a uniquely Chicanx/Latinx text.

Often considered a "bastard jargon: part Spanish and part English, with neither *gravitas* nor a clear identity" (Stavans B7), Spanglish maintains a maligned presence within the US. Aside from its lack of a singular linguistic identifier, Spanglish, among Spanish and English speaking purists, has come too represent a linguistic take over in process. For monolingual English speakers Spanglish represents the continued linguistic take over of the U.S., while for

monolingual Spanish speakers Spanglish signifies the continued influence American English on a national and global scale. And all the while, Spanglish, used by more than “35 million people of Hispanic decent in the United States” (ibid), continues to thrive between two resistant linguistic cultures. But the deliberate rejection of Spanglish by some scholars does not remove the significance it has in bilingual Chicano/Latino narratives. In fact, what such rejections invite, in my opinion, is a much more concentrated exploration into those Chicano/Latino narratives that exist between, culture, language, and U.S. society. And while Torres’ works explores the textual moments when Spanish and English come into contact, my interest in language, particularly Spanglish, focus on the “artistic choice[s]” or “strategies” (76) that Torres, unfortunately, glosses over. It is my belief that exploring the mixes of Spanish, English and Spanglish as a narrative strategy introduces a unique area of narrative analysis that enstranges its readers towards alternative understandings of Chicanx/Latinx narratives.

Situating bilingual uses of Spanish and Spanglish as a narrative strategy that authors construct to create Chicanx/Latinx texts necessitates, in my opinion, a brief overview of how these language processes are labeled among scholars, what these linguistic movements are called, and how culture relates to such movements. Torres, for example, understands these narrative movements to be code switching, which she defines as “the alternation of two languages in a verbal or written text” (76). Similarly, sociolinguist Ilan Stavans, in his essay “The Gravitas of Spanglish”, understands Spanglish to be a “a product of *mestizaje*, the cross fertilization of two perfectly discernable codes” (B9) such as Spanish and English. Interestingly, both interpretations of Spanglish establish a form of communication that exists, much like Chicanos and Latinos living in the U.S., between cultures, and function as an “intraethnic vehicle of communication” (ibid) for its speakers. Code switching practices amongst Chicanxs and

Latinxs likewise underscores a cultural affiliation that Spanglish is often associated with within the United States.

Aside from cultural stigmas/associations Spanglish language use creates for speakers, it likewise carries a profound political significance within the U.S. Antonia Darder, in “The Politics of Language: An Introduction”, speaks to this struggle when she notes, “the “othering” of cultures and language outside of the mainstream (U.S.) has consistently burdened minority language populations to prove themselves as “descent human beings” worthy and deserving of entrance into the inner sanctum of nation-state citizenship and the opportunities it affords”(233). Darder’s observations of language underscore the very political, very real struggles bilingual Spanish, and Spanglish speaking individuals experience within the U.S. Rather than embrace one’s ability to communicate in Spanish and/or Spanglish, minority speakers become a population that must police their language preference in hopes of being views as decent human beings. Moreover, language becomes the measurement of the admittance into mainstream America for minorities. Those who refuse to speak Spanish and/or Spanglish in favor of English are identified as decent, and minorities who maintain Spanish/Spanglish linguistic practices are identified as socially and politically indecent populations who are relegated to the margins of America. Given what language grants or denies for speakers in the U.S it is no wonder Darder contends, “it is impossible to contemplate our human existence outside of the realm of language” (231).

As Conchita’s struggles with power continue to manifest themselves she finally breaks away from the oppressive rule of her husband by taking his life. However, and in troubling fashion, Conchita also renounces “any claim to the title and endowment of Arizona” (Issue 7). Once Conchita has made the declaration her phenotype undergoes another change. As the

following panel indicates, Conchita's denouncement of her assumed European power has a visibly marked affect on her phenotype.



Figure 12: Consuela in power



Figure 13: Consuela after releasing her power

Comparing the two panels above when Conchita's role of duchess is officially conferred and when her renouncement has been publicly made, we can identify that, indeed, Conchita's physical presentation has become much darker as the graphic novel arrived at its ending. As the above panels suggest, once Conchita has publicly relinquished her power and authority over Arizona and its indigenous populations, she likewise loses any sign of her much lighter phenotype. Thus, Conchita's phenotype is not only used as a marker of identification throughout *DjangoZorro*, but it is also used as markers of power, subordination, inferiority, and Otherness. That English and Spanish are used as markers of differentiation throughout the graphic novel with the former tied to manifest destiny further exacerbates the tension that Conchita comes to personify throughout the graphic novel. If, as Aldama writes, comics and graphic novels can "stimulate imagination and emotion as much as any other storytelling form" (Brain 3), phenotype and language become narrative tools that invite emotive responses regarding the role of the power throughout *DjangoZorro* via our engagements with the work and the character created

within it.

While the phenotypic construction in *DjangoZorro* undoubtedly complicates progressive ideas of culturally mindful coloring, it is by no means the only or most salient representation in comic books and graphic novels. In February of 2016 Marvel relaunched the *Red Wolf* series, and introduced readers to Chicana Sheriff's deputy Daniela Ortiz who, like Conchita, functions as a crucial character whose involvement shapes and progresses the narrative. Like Conchita, Deputy Ortiz also lives along the U.S./Mexico in the border town of Timely, New Mexico in the present day United States. However, a focused examination of Deputy Ortiz's phenotype underscore the significant impact the continuity of color has for scholars and readers who are mindful of the uses of color throughout a work. By turning to the visual presentation or framing of deputy Ortiz we see that colorist Miroslav Mrva maintains a consistent fidelity to her phenotypic presentation throughout the comic series. Yet, the issues of power in relation to Whiteness are still projected onto reader through deputy Ortiz's relationship with the comic's main character Red Wolf. That Red Wolf's phenotype are consistent with other Anglo settlers in the town of Timely highlights a continued thread of phenotypic association, especially when Red Wolf is juxtaposed with Chicana sheriff's deputy Daniela Ortiz. What these two characters' highlight for readers, like that Conchita, is that when it comes to the relations of power the issue of phenotype as a paratextual frame of analysis are still used to color reader's perceptions. Moreover, as the *Red Wolf* narrative progresses the role of color in relation to power struggles between Ortiz and Wolf become significantly more pronounced areas of analysis.



Figure 14: Red Wolf



Figure 15: Sheriff's Deputy Daniela Ortiz

While much can be written about the complicated and stereotypic Indigenous constructions of Red Wolf (i.e. he is a tracker, he's always connected with nature, portrayed as the noble Red Man, the racist implications of naming an indigenous person 'Red' anything, etc.), the continued use of color as a maker or identifier of power between Red Wolf and Sheriff's deputy Ortiz underscore a visual connection to *DjangoZorro*. For Mrva, color is used to locate or highlight for reader's roles of authority that are consistent with a dominant Anglo American society. In fact, when readers see Red Wolf use excessive force against a thief who has overpowered deputy Ortiz he is constructed as an all white male when making his apprehension (figure 15). Unfortunately, Mrva continues this trend of whiteness and power throughout the many shared panel interactions of Red Wolf and deputy Ortiz. In one such panel, just as Red Wolf is saving deputy Ortiz from a deadly snake we are graced with an interactive panel in which the lighter skinned, larger than panel-life Red Wolf looks down upon the smaller, indebted, darker deputy as she struggles to stay in the panel. While both Red Wolf and deputy Ortiz are intended to be characters of color in the comic, the relation of power to whiteness is clearly constructed by Mrva. The choices of color complicates the idea that phenotype does not affect the narrative progression or engagement.



Figure 16: Red Wolf battling



Figure 17: Deputy Ortiz and Red Wolf at a stand still

Further complicating matters of phenotype as it relates to power, readers are presented with a comic panel that encapsulates this unsuccessful balance of coloration. As the comic series closes deputy Ortiz is appointed Sheriff of the Santa Rosa community and surrounding area by default, and officially asks Red Wolf to become a deputy. While the physical presentations of deputy Ortiz and Red Wolf have not changed both the deputy and Red Wolf are constructed as phenotypically lighter characters. The only change, it appears, is the ascription of Anglo European power that both take on.



Figure 18: Sheriff Ortiz looks for a deputy

As the process of socially acceptable power is publicly conferred onto the newly appointed Sheriff Ortiz by the Anglo mayor of Santa Rosa readers are confronted with a startling comic panel that completes the erasure of color. As the mayor drops the Sheriff's badge into Sheriff Ortiz's hand the comic panel zooms into a shot of just hands of the mayor, Sheriff Ortiz and a badge (figure 18). Sadly, both hands are colored white, and the idea of a Chicana woman becoming Sheriff via phenotypic identification is erased from the panel.



Figure 19: The role of whiteness and power

If, as McCloud reminds us, “comics is a **sight-based** medium” whereby the “whole world of **visual iconography** is at the disposal of comics creators” (emphasis original to text 202), this particular panel misconstrues Sheriff Ortiz's Chicana identity via phenotype, and while Conchita's relationship of power is constructed and associated with Spanish Europe, Sheriff Ortiz's relationship with power is predicated on a U.S. American ideal of the discrimination, structures, and struggles with power that upon its obtaining erase her Chicana phenotype.

The emotive response that graphic novels and comics can generate for readers bring me back to my initial claims about the associations between paratext and phenotype. Throughout this

chapter Conchita's physical body has been constructed as a visual frame that seeks to engage readers on various platitudes with the goal of creating a type of "audience involvement" via "the degree to which the audience (or reader) identifies with a story's character" (McCloud 42). What I wish to argue for the remainder of the chapter, and what I have highlighted throughout is that while I agree with McCloud's assertion that audience involvement can be created by a story's character, we should be mindful that the inverse, that is a character like Conchita, among others, has written onto herself, a character story, that likewise shapes our levels of audience involvement (or lack thereof) in a given text. By engaging and considering how a character's body can be read as a paratextual frame this chapter pushes on the boundaries of paratextual analysis to include the frames of bodily representation in graphic novels and comics. If paratext is capable of establishing "initial reader contracts and cues that trigger in the reader's mind important scripts...that we anticipate...once inside the story proper" (Aldama 22), then the role of phenotype as a form of paratextual referent invites us to consider how oppression, culture, race, and color affect our engagements with characters like Conchita whose coloring throughout *DjangoZorro* take on more significance as the narrative progresses.

That paratext continues to find its ways further and further into a text is a rather new argument. The recently published Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, for example notes that "in English-language criticism so far most paratextual investigation has focused on the study of titles" (419). Yet when considering the role that phenotype plays throughout *DjangoZorro* through a character like Conchita we see that paratextual analysis affords a richer, more involved engagement of the narrative. Moreover, in asserting that phenotype functions a framing referent makes new, or enstranges the ways readers and scholars engage this and future works. In this case the use of lighter phenotype and their associations with European power and

control as opposed to the darker phenotypes associated with the loss of power and control speak to the continued role color plays in relation to characterization. Telles and Murguía speak to these very correlations when they note, “Mexican-Americans of progressively more Native American and darker phenotypes suffer greater...discrimination and thus lower returns to human capital than their lighter and more European-looking counterparts” (683). Considering then that these very correlations are progressively reflected by Wagner through his coloring of Conchita we see a continued perpetuation of such discriminations.

That Conchita’s fluctuations in color are associated with the gains and loss of power make new what it means to analyze the process of coloring and shading of characters throughout various moment of a narrative if we remain mindful of “the power of literature to shift readers’ behavior, outlooks, self-conceptions, self-titles and attitudes” (Vasquez 919). Moreover, the character stories that are presented to readers via “ethnic literatures” can serve “an important social function in breaking open antiquated curricula and infusing readers with refreshing perspectives that celebrate diversity while still stressing some commonality” (Vasquez 919) between various ethnic groups. Unfortunately, Tarantino, Matt Wagner, and Brennan Wagner chose not to capitalize on the opportunities a character like Conchita could have been for the vast and continuously growing Chicano/Latino populations in the US. And although Tarantino himself describes the contents of *DjangoZorro* as “a labor of love” (Introduction *DjangoZorro*), it appears that such labors also inherently maintain the US popular cultural status quo for many of its characters.

To conclude I acknowledge that much more can and should be said about the multitude of characters that are included throughout the text- the indigenous peasants, servants, Don de La Vega’s indigenous, mute carriage driver Bernardo, etc.- Conchita as an introductory point of

reference and analysis in *DjangoZorro* offers a rich inroad of new and continued analysis in relation the connections between phenotype and paratext in comics and graphic novels. These correlations present readers and scholar's with new and varied ways of interpreting characters throughout an entire graphic novel and or comic, and seek to make new our depths of analysis in future works. Moreover, by engaging phenotype as a form of paratext, the multidisciplinary study of paratext move from the peripheries of texts, chapters, and titles and into comic and the graphic narratives themselves. I believe the move to engage phenotype as a paratextual process enstranges, or makes new, our readings and analyses of characters like Conchita and Sheriff Danienla. Quite simply, to better understand the histories, cultures, ethnicities, and struggles that can be drawn onto characters, we need to consider their paratextual presentations to readers, and explore how these inflections estrange reader's engagements with comic and graphic narratives.

CHAPTER 4

Reimagining the Brown Screen: Narrative *Mexicanidad* in Robert Rodriguez's *Machete* and Justin Lin's *Fast & Furious*

There should be no arbitrary limits set on
the variety of expressive means that can
be drawn upon by the filmmaker
-Sergei M. Eisenstein-

"Our basic attitude is that what we see
exists"
-Torbin Grodal -

A 2014 Gallup poll conducted by Rebecca Riffkin and Frank Newport found that "Hispanic adults...reported spending more money on a daily basis, on average, than is typical for the U.S. adult population: \$96 vs. \$90, respectively." Because of an overall higher spending average Riffken and Newport conclude that Hispanics "are likely to spend more than the average American." Coupling these findings with the results of the Motion Pictures of America Association's 2014 Theatrical Market Statistics publication that concluded "Hispanics are more likely than any other ethnic group to purchase movie tickets (23%) relative to their share of the population and share of moviegoers (17%)" (13), and we can conclude that Chicanxs and Latinxs enjoy going to the movies. In fact, according to the MPAA, Chicanx/Latinx populations "reported the highest annual attendance per capita...attending on average 5.2 times year" (14). Clearly, Chicanxs and Latinxs are drawn to the big screen. And why not? In the US movies have "replaced newspapers and the novels" (Gonzalez 215) as the primary social forms of narratives expression. Unfortunately, the US film industry has also been one of the "primary tools for banishing Hispanics to the shadows of American culture" (Gonzalez 215). Quite frankly, strewn across today's motion pictures Chicanx and Latinx actors have maintained a "violent, outlaw, marginal identity" (216), the produce "reinforced prejudices" (217) for moviegoers. If, as Grodal notes, our dominant Anglo societies "basic attitude is that what [they] see

exists” (255), then it should come as no surprise that the stereotypical attitudes and mistreatment Chicanxs and Latinxs experience occur. They are just playing out what they have already seen.

The subjugated, stereotypical, and racist role Chicanos and Latin@s have maintained in 20th century and early 21st century American cinema is not a new argument. Film scholar Antonio Rios-Bustemante, for example, acknowledges, “racial stereotypes and distortions of Latino, Latin American, and Spanish history and culture were present from the earliest days” (23) of American cinema. Likewise, Fregoso, in *The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture*, underscores continued mistreatment of Chicanx/Latinx character in films when she notes that “negative representations about Chicanos originated during the first moving pictures, beginning with the early twentieth century “Greaser” genre and on to the “Western,” the “social problem” genre, up to the recent onslaught of “gangsploitation” films”. (xvii). Along with Fregoso’s stereotypic examples Charles M. Tatum, in *Chicano Popular Culture*, also identifies the “Castilian Caballero Films” such as *Zorro* that casts phenotypically white Spaniards helping hapless Mexicans peons, and “Dark Lady Films” in which Chicana/Latina characters were cast as barmaids. Other negative types that Tatum highlights include the “Good Samaritan Films” where “Mexican American and Mexican characters were portrayed as childlike beings incapable of controlling their own personal social destinies,” and “Progressive Films” that sought to expose the social causes of racism against Mexican Americans and of their underclass economic status” (52-55) in relation White American cinematic counterparts. Chicanx/Latinx cinematic marginalization has not, however, gone uncontested.

Film scholars like José E. Limón and Chon Noriega have actively sought to complicate the inherently flawed nature of American cinema by pointing out the continued mistreatments of Chicanxs and Latinxs in film. In the early 1970s Limón was already criticizing the American

Film industry for their problematic and stereotypical representations of Chicanx characters as “dirty, violent, hypersexual, treacherous, and thieving...cowardly, apathetic and dormant” (3). Noriega moved away from character representation and document how Chicanx directors and the actors were disrupting American Cinema. Identifying expressions of “resistance, affirmation, maintenance and *mestizaje*” (169) as cinematic “weapons” that resisted Hollywood’s iterations of Chicanxs and Latinxs. Over time, Chicanx/Latinx cinema as a weapon of resistance has maintained an influential presence. Fregoso, for example, understands Chicano cinema as “the documentation of social reality through oppositional forms of knowledge about Chicanos” (xv). Interestingly, while many of today’s American films continue to perpetuate Chicanxs and/or Latinxs in a multitude of negative ways, Chicanx/Latinx identified directors are finding new ways of challenging stereotypic, racist, subjugating roles for their Chicanx/Latinx characters and cinematic narratives. By new, I mean that Chicanx/Latinx directors are actively constructing narrative cultures within their films that dramatically contrasts dominant American iterations of Chicanx/Latinx presentations and representations. A comparison of the 2010 film *Machete* directed by Robert Rodriguez, and the 2009 film *Fast & the Furious* directed by Justin Lin exemplify the continued racial/ethnic struggle directors like Rodriguez reimagine in their own work. What results, then, are films that make new our understanding, that is estrange, our engagements and consumption of films by and about Chicanx and Latinx populations in the U.S.

Already this dissertation has mentioned-, in brief, some of the ways Rodriguez makes new our understanding of Chicanxs in film, yet this chapter will place focused emphasis and explicate Rodriguez’s work more fully. In many ways, *Machete*, speaks directly to alternative approaches that Rodriguez takes in relation to identifying the roles and/or relationships that Chicanx/Latinx characters maintain in his cinematic narratives. Speaking broadly about such

movements, Aldama acknowledges that in many of his films Rodriguez asks his audience to “appreciate, think, and feel for the Latinos (in the film) in a more complex, hybrid ways” (61 Cinema of RR) than what is consistently and currently projected. For Aldama, Rodriguez produces film that ask viewers to move away from tradition Anglo racist, stereotypical representations of Chicanxs and Latinxs in American cinema like *Fast and Furious* as well as oppositional representations that dominate Chicanx films like, say, Luis Valdez’s *La Bamba*. Moreover, closer examination of *Machete* and *Fast and Furious* uncovers specific character constructions that introduces new and exciting ways directors like Robert Rodriguez are constructing Chicanx and Latinx characters. In other words, while dominant American cinema continues to produce films that negatively stereotype, racialize and disparage Chicanxs and Latinxs via the characters they produce, directors like Robert Rodriguez, with films like *Machete* disrupt these productions by deliberately constructing films of that cast Chicanxs and Latinxs in a new light.

First introduced by directors Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez as a mock trailer in the 2007 double-feature film *Grindhouse*, *Machete* becomes Rodriguez’s 2010 full length feature, a “creatively violent ... cheerfully cheesy and unfailingly” film, “persistent in its depiction of capitalist, racist white men as the worst bad guys” (Templeton). While it is certainly true that *Machete* hits many of these descriptors, careful examination of Rodriguez’s directorial approaches reveals a unique cinematic experience. In presenting an American produced film about Mexicans, Rodriguez recalibrates audience expectations of the cinematic “*mexicano*,” which has consistently been portrayed in American films in particularly negative stereotypes-. As a way of mapping out Rodriguez’s filmic direction and movements concerning his cinematic *mexicano*, this chapter explores how Rodriguez’s *Machete* uses specific filmic devices to

introduce a new *mexicanidad* that challenges stereotypical conventions and expectations. Rodriguez invites audiences to engage with a new concept of *mexicanidad* as they traverse various borders. Moreover, by paying close attention to how Rodriguez constructs his cinematic Mexicano/as, particularly his constructions of Machete and the Shé, this chapter focuses on what is made new in this area of film scholarship.

That narratives are made new or estranged is, by now, an argument that has been consistently presented throughout this dissertation. Yet to better understand how Rodriguez makes new our understanding through a film like *Machete* I wish to briefly discuss how, along with enstrangement, I engage the terms filmic blueprint, and *mexicanidad* throughout this chapter. Beginning with filmic blueprint, I return to Aldama's exploration of the "filmic blueprint," in "Body Movements and Audience Emotion in Mira Nair's Filmic Bombay," in which he describes a filmic blueprint as an approach that is "as deliberate and thought out as possible to ensure the accurate gap filling faculties and emotive and cognitive processes" ("Body Movements," 93). For Aldama, when a director seeks to make a film they shape every aspect of it and create a deliberate progression in their film that is intended to elicit specific emotions from audiences. When considering a director like Rodriguez the use of a filmic blueprint allows one to explore how a film like *Machete* guides audiences toward a reevaluated viewing of an American filmic representation of Mexican identified characters that are unlike what has perpetuated or examined by directors and scholars, or how this Mexican identified character type is perpetuated by historically typical stereotypes. Moreover, in utilizing a filmic blueprint in *Machete* and *Fast and Furious* we can examine what kinds of gaps Rodriguez and Lin are trying to create and/or fill for viewing audiences.

A specific gap that Rodriguez complicates and which Lin adheres to is the concept of a

cinematic echo-racial identity throughout both their films that relies on what Laura G. Gutierrez calls *mexicandad*. Gutierrez defines *mexicanidad* in her book *Performing Mexicanidad: Vendidas y Cabareteras On The Transnational Stage* as “a malleable concept; that is, the artists

who ‘unsettle comfort’ are deploying performance/performative strategies to challenge general and fixed understandings of ‘lo mexicano’” (21). In other words, *Mexicanidad* attempts to establish discomfoting ideals of what it means to be Mexicano through performance.

Throughout her work Gutierrez highlights this theatrical moments when Mexicana and Chicana performers that challenge or invert social constructions of machismo, patriarchy, and submissiveness, to name but a few. While Gutierrez explores *mexicanidad* through the medium of Mexican and Chicana cabaret performances, this chapter deploys *mexicanidad* in the areas of cinema as a way of engaging the ideas, issues, and constructions of Chicanx and Latinx identities on the silver screen. This chapter explores how the use of Spanish works as a blueprint of *mexicanidad* that discomforts the US cinematic ideals of Mexican, Chicanx and Latinx constructions. Moreover, this chapter will also highlight the continued struggle Chicanxs and Latinxs experience by exploring how *mexicanidad*, in cinema, becomes a marker of typing and discriminatory constructions. Turning to Rodriguez’s *Machete* the concept of *mexicanidad* is placed at the center of analysis in relation to the films titular character.



Figure 20: English only Campaign in *Machete*

As Rodriguez's film opens, viewing audiences watch as the titular character Machete, played by Danny Trejo, and his partner race through a sepia toned "MEXICO" toward a drug house where a young woman who as been missing is being held hostage. During the drive Machete, his partner, and a digitized police chief engage in various verbal exchanges that seek to dissuade the determined Machete from charging the heavily guarded drug house and saving the young woman. In this initial scene, Rodriguez introduces many of the filmic devices that establish a filmic blueprint that will guide audiences throughout *Machete*. For instance, this particular opening sequence, which occurs "before the title credits appear" (Cinema 125) introduces fast cuts of extreme close ups of characters, "a B-movie celluloid aesthetic" (Cinema 126), and is soon coupled with an almost immediate sound of a "foreign" Spanish language conversation. Monolingual English speaking audiences are granted the luxury of sub-titles so they can follow along as best as they can. That Spanish is used as the linguistic introduction underscores a deliberate on Rodriguez's behalf to structure his film in very specific ways. "Language, after all, is at the heart of an individual's social identity" (Gonzalez 207), and for Rodriguez the uses of Spanish in an American film is a framing tool that he relies on to authenticate or willfully style Machete and audiences engagements of Machete. Complicating the

issues of language further, Rodriguez uses the opening sequence to blend both English and Spanish, a process that is repeated by various characters throughout the movie.

Linguist Ilan Stavans, in *Spanglish*, calls this blending of Spanish and English Spanglish and defines it as “the verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispano civilizations” (5). For Stavans the intermixing of Spanish and English, or Spanglish is a form of “mestizaje...the cross-fertilization of two perfectly discernible codes” (Gravitas B9) of communication amongst Chicanx and Latinx populations. And while Stavans admits that Spanglish “is often described as the trap, la trampa Hispanics fall into on the road to assimilation” (5), Stavans hopes “que crezca y se reproduzca in future editions” (61). Like Stavans’s explorations of Spanglish, Lourdes Torres explores the process of code-switching, which she defines as the “alterations of verbal or written text” (76) in her article “In the Contact Zone: Code-Switching Strategies by Latino/a Writers.” For Torrez, writers who willfully include linguistic code-switching in Latinx narratives represent “a cultural specific Latinidad- they use Spanish to reference their particular histories, experiences, demographic realities, and ways of being Latino/a” (79). While Stavans’s term is significant in that it is aware of and acknowledges the continued encounter and mixing of language, Torrez’s code-switching understands this specific intermixing of languages as an identifiable way of being. Thus, when audiences hear Michelle Rodriguez’s character Luz tells Machete, “trabajas hoy, you pay me mañana” (min. 9:21) she is enacting and legitimizing a part of her Latinidad that audiences must likewise acknowledge. It is a way of being whereby Chicanx and Latinx uses of language make new for readers interpretations and iterations of dominant Anglo stereotypes that are often associated with language.

Considering that much of the film is in English and only had an initial US premiere, Rodriguez was acutely aware that the majority of audiences would be primarily monolingual

English speaking. However, that interplay of language that Rodriguez constructs via his character's attempts to enstrange audience's expectations of what an American film should sound like by heightening our awareness of Lantinxidiad, and monolingual English foreignness by utilizing the Spanish language. Moreover, his decision to open his film with Spanish complicates the connection monolingual English-speaking audiences may be attempting to make with the film. Kenneth Burke speaks to this complication when, in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he writes that an individual persuades or connects with someone by "identifying your ways with his" (55). However, Rodriguez's move to introduce his film with Spanish identifies a specific, ideal viewer that he aligns with, and who is able to fully engage with and understands Rodriguez's code-switching. This ideal viewer, much like Aldama's ideal audience, , although imagined by the director, is one who is able to understand this particular introduction optimally. The ideal viewer is one who is able to identify and understand Rodriguez's code-switching as an alignment of Latinidad. The ideal viewer is able to engage and understand the film on all of its terms.

Rodriguez's use of Spanish not only speaks to the presence of Latinx viewing audiences, but of his desire to create another point of enstrangement between majority audiences and the film itself through his deliberate blueprinting of Spanish into the framework of the film. Such an enstrangeing move, interestingly, is not lost on a sociologist like Lisa Garcia Bedolla who notes "language is the means with which ethnic groups communicate" and "develop feelings of solidarity" (265). In *Fluid Borders: Latino Power, Identity, and Politics in Los Angeles*, Bedolla also claims that sociolinguists concede language as "the key to how ethnicity is 'recognized, interpreted and experienced'" (63). For Bedolla language establishes spaces of inside and outside locations amongst speakers, and for Rodriguez's *Machete* those who can claim a solidarity with

the film are ones who understand the film ideally. Moreover, Bedolla's assertions of how language can positively and negatively affect ethnic minority *and* majority group interactions further highlight the impact a non dominant language like Spanish can have as an estranging medium for viewing audiences who are not able to assume the role an ideal viewer. Thus, Rodriguez's blueprint, although mindful that it will exclude mono-lingual audiences, includes Spanish-English code-switching as a primary form of audience engagement and connectivity. Moreover, this particular type of code-switching is lost to those monolingual viewers who are relegated to reading the included sub-titles.

Although Rodriguez utilized Spanish as a cinematic blueprint to guide audiences throughout *Machete*, Taiwanese American director Justin Lin's 2009 film *Fast & Furious* also begins with a prequel-like introduction that, although similar to Rodriguez's introduction, casts Latinx characters in complicated, subjected roles of dominant Anglo expectations. In fact, cultural studies scholar Mary Beltrán, who has written various works on the *Fast & Furious* franchise, notes in her 2013 article "Fast and Bilingual: Fast & Furious and the Latinization of Racelessness" that while the fourth installment of franchise "is the first that makes Latinos, and Latino culture, central defining elements" (77) of the film, it nevertheless "reinforces Hollywood traditions of the white centrism, reinforcing notions of white male mastery" (77) through lead protagonist Brian O'Conner (played by the late Paul Walker). While *Fast & Furious* diligently works to include a stronger presence of Latinidad, Beltrán's interviews with Lin in 2010 and 2012 expose the driving motivations for this inclusion. Throughout the interview Lin acknowledges the lack of diversity in Hollywood, and discusses the many cultural "layers that we (he and Universal Studios) can add" (93) to the film through characters like Dominican characters Don Omar and Tego Calderón. And during filming, Lin "fought to let" Omar and

Calderón “speak in the film as they normally would, in Spanish” (93). However, Lin concedes that much of these allowances were, in large part, due to Universal Studios’ “potential awareness of Latinos and the other nonwhite viewers” (93). While according to Beltrán “US Latino audiences are now considered large enough to factor into domestic marketing plans and thus recognized as a group worth targeting” (93), Lin was “adamant that casting the right actors rather than aiming to cast a particular mix of actors of various ethnic backgrounds was most important to the films integrity” (94). In other words, Lin’s primary concern was a cinematic blueprint whereby those who could act Latino enough trumped those actors who were, by ethno-racial standards, actually Latinx.

Relying on an objective point of view shot, *Fast & Furious* opens with audiences hovering over a roadway, and the words “Dominican Republic” appear at the center of the screen to inform viewers of their cinematic location. As the camera pans up a semi is barreling towards the camera, it soon zooms by and we become aware of a vehicle convoy following the semi. Like Rodriguez, Lin soon moves to fast cuts and close ups of the drivers. As the characters communicate with one another via Walkie-talkie we become aware that both English and Spanish are used. Unlike *Machete*’s deliberate use of Spanish as a tool of directed expression, when Spanish is used in *Fast & Furious* by two members of the convoy they are told by their leader Dominic Toretto to “stop the chatter” (min. 3) and focus on the job at hand. Moreover, the Spanish that is communicated is inconsequential to the film and the overall progression of the cinematic narrative. For Toretto, who is played by Vin Diesel, Spanish is ancillary noise that clouds the teams judgment and focus. Moreover, the Dominican driver whose cargo is overtaken by the convey is relegated to primarily shouting curse words at the assailants.

As the prequel like introduction concludes, the film credits begins as audiences are dropped

right into the middle of a beach party as Toretto and the team celebrate a successful theft. Lin continues the use of fast cuts and close up shots of characters and dancers, while all the while the extradiegetic Spanish dance music of Dominican singer Pit Bull plays on. For Lin the Spanish used throughout the opening sequences of the film identify for audiences a particular type of code-switching and seeks, more than anything, to fulfill stereotypic expectations that Latinxs are nothing more than linguistic and musical chatter. From a literary perspective Torres considers this type of inconsequential code-switching as a deliberate attempt of creating,

a more ethnic text. But they also may serve to perpetuate mainstream expectations of the Latino/a text in that they can make the text exotic and allow the reader to believe that s/he is interacting with and appropriating the linguistic Other, while in reality a reader does not have to leave the comfortable realm of his/her own complacent monolingualism (78).

In Lin's case the uses of Spanish that are peppered throughout the introduction of *Fast & Furious* attempt to construct a cinematic blueprint whereby the ideal viewers are transported to an exotic location where Spanish is used as a way of exoticizing the narrative without affecting it. Furthermore, while the use of code-switching similar to that of *Machete* is used in subsequent parts of the *Fast & Furious*, the way Lin utilizes it likewise perpetuates his blueprint use of Spanish as a marker of subjugated discrimination and stereotyping through the role of the primary antagonist and cartel Kingpin Arturo Braga.

Working under the alias Campos, Braga spends most of his time looking for the kinds of drivers "who would sell their abuelita" (min. 36) to get a shipment of drugs from Mexico into the United States. Described as "just one of us, came up from the streets, down for el barrio" (min. 49), Braga stands in as what Charles Ramirez-Berg, in *Latino Images and Film: Stereotypes*,

Subversions, and Resistance, ” calls a “El Bandido”. Although Braga himself is a cleaner, well groomed version of the old bandidos of American westerns, Ramirez-Bergs bandido “is slicker...but he still ruthlessly pursues his vulgar cravings-for money, power, and sexual pleasure- and routinely employs vicious and illegal means to obtain them” (68). That Braga selects, uses and then murders his drug runners so he doesn't have to pay them speaks to the kind of late 20th century/early 21st century bandido Ramirez-Berg describes. Yet, Ramirez-Berg’s omission of the role language plays limits character depth and influence on viewing audiences. By this I mean that when audiences engage a cinematic bandido like Braga, his constant code-switching establishes a cultural and linguist identity that viewers rely on to shape their understanding of the narrative. That Braga offers a richer variant of Ramirez-Berg’s bandido, does not mask the reality that Lin constructs this particular code-switching character within dominant Anglo stereotypes of Latinx characters. And considering Ramirez-Bergs’ claim that “a stereotype is the part that stands for the whole” (16) Lin’s construction of Braga as a villainous bandido is grossly and culturally, negligent. Nevertheless, it speaks to the assumed expectations dominant Anglo audiences maintain when watching American cinema.

Juxtaposing Lin’s construction of Braga with Rodriguez’s construction of the samurai sword wielding Rogelio Torres who is played in brownface by Steven Segal (yes, that Steven Segal). Like Braga, Torres is also a Mexican Kingpin, but his construction is markedly different from Lin’s vision of Bandido. Admittedly, audiences are aware of Torres’ brutality and violence. In the prequel introduction he murders Machete’s wife in front of him, for example. Yet, Torres’ code-switching throughout the film is deliberately used to typify his stereotypic characterization. Indeed, Aldama concedes as much when he notes, “[A]s Rogelio Torres, Steven Segal performs an exaggerated caricature of himself-or his roles in prior martial-arts films-and lays on thick a

heavily accented Spanglish” (Cinema 127). What is rather compelling about Aldama's passing observation, is that while Segal does much to exaggerate himself, his *mexicanidad* is identified by the accent Spanglish he relies on throughout the film. In other words, without the use of Spanglish ideal viewers would have to work that much harder to separate Torres the martial artist from Torres the Martial Arts Mexican. Such association are crucial for Rodriguez’s vision of creating a “character that people can latch onto” (Cinema 145), and observe as a kingpin like Torres.

Rodriguez’s code-switching blueprint of Torres differs from Lin’s in that while Lin uses code-switching as a way of cinematically authenticating Braga, Rodriguez’s use of code-switching Spanglish is used as a way to set a “parodic tone of the film” (Cinema 127). In other worlds while Lin uses code-switching to establish and sustain a cultural and linguistic Other, Rodriguez’s use of code-switching sets up an American culture caricature he parades and dismantles. The result, in Rodriguez’s case, is a refashioned bandido who, while fulfilling assumed dominant Anglo norms and expectations, is manipulated and exposed as parody by the very culture he represents. This parodic blueprinting of brownfaced characterization, however, does not diminish the various political issues, struggles and violence acted upon undocumented populations, Chicanx and Latinx communities. And while Lin’s primary concern is to entertain audiences at the discriminatory and stereotypic expense of Chicanxs and Latinxs in the US, Rodriguez’s film uses its entertainment platform to also speak out in such a way that his film asks “his audiences ...to appreciate, think, and feel for...Latinos in more complex, hybrid ways” (Cinema 61). For Rodriguez, *Machete* becomes a cinematic space where Chicanx and Latinx issues become a primary, driving force of the narrative.



Figure 21: Steven Segal as Rogelio Torrez



Figure 22: John Ortiz as Antonio Braga

Having examined the significant impact code-switching has in creating a specific type of *mexicanidad* in both *Machete* and *Fast & Furious* the role of language use maintains an important analytical presence when we consider the political implications code-switching likewise introduces. Because the interplay of language is quite evident in both prequels, the cinematic tensions that emerge from these films foreshadow the politically driven themes and agendas that Lin and Rodriguez construct. As an enstranging device, Rodriguez and Lin's directorial choices regarding language complicate the English-only politics that are present in *Machete*, and which are reified in *Fast & Furious*. In Rodriguez's case, while the use of code-switching enstranges, or makes new for audiences their expectations of language in cinema, it also speaks to a political act that challenges concepts of English-only initiatives touted across the U.S. that are being enacted like, for example, H.R. 123—which declares that because “English is the language of opportunity” (section 101.5b) in the U.S. the “official language of Federal Government is English” (Section 161). This form the legislation according to Educational Policy scholar Antonia Darder supports “nativist perceptions...in which the process of racialization is manifest through the suppression of linguistic rights” (233) amongst Spanish speaking

individuals.

Working to directly challenge issues of monolinguality, among a plethora of issues Chicana, Latina, and undocumented individuals struggle through in the U.S., Rodriguez's use of Spanish-English code-switching, and the contentious dialogue about this relationship amongst politicians throughout the film creates a cinematic blueprint intended to shed light on such an issue. Indeed, *Machete* is a film that, while entertaining, "is very contemporary in terms of the social and political issues that it touches on. It depicts a contemporary reality with great seriousness" (Cinema 129), and does not shy away from constructing a filmic blueprint that presents audiences with graphic, disturbing acts of violence that, although exaggerated, various Chicana and Latina populations face, undocumented or otherwise. That an English-only legislation is one of a series of issues ranging from an electrified border wall to mass deportations of all undocumented U.S. inhabitants as part of the political platform of Senator McLaughlin, who is played by Robert De Niro, underscores the contemporariness of Rodriguez's film as it relates to Chicana and Latina population groups in the US. By this I mean that while Rodriguez works to make *Machete* an entertaining film, his blueprint brings from the margins the losses of the life, discrimination, and mistreatment of the Chicana, Latina and undocumented peoples in the U.S.

Joseph Nevins, in "A Beating Worse than Death: Imagining and Contesting Violence in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands", contends, for example, that "more than 3,600 "illegal" immigrants lost their lives between 1995 and 2005 while trying to cross from Mexico into the United States," and acknowledges that the count is conservative because "many bodies are never found" (1). While the rising number of violent deaths are appalling the reason, according to Nevins that these deaths "receive so little attention" (3), is due to three processes that include

“illegalization”, which he describes as “the process that involves the construction of unauthorized immigrants-principally from Mexico and Central America-as law breakers violators of national territory, and threats to the national social fabric” (4). For Nevins, the violence that takes place on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands is not worth knowing because, after all, its just “non-white, non English speaking” “undesirable Others” (13). Yet, *Machete* functions as a film that complicates such invisibilities by making issues like immigration and the English only movements part of *Machete*’s cinematic blueprint. In other words, to understand *Machete* viewers must engage the very issues of violence and mistreatment that U.S. commercial media is inclined to share. When we cast the same analytical lens onto *Fast & Furious* unfortunately, Lin’s cinematic blueprint regarding Chicanx and Latinx groups remains problematically consistent.

Throughout *Fast & Furious* the construction of Chicanx and Latinx population groups reflect more and more the assumed expectations that movie going Americans have come to expect. Taking Nevins’s observations of illegality as it relates to violent, antagonistic violators of U.S. laws, the primary Latinx characters of *Fast & Furious* like the already discussed Braga and his right hand person, Fenix played by Afro-Cuban American Lazaro “Laz” Alonzo, epitomize the types violence that can be acted upon them. For example, throughout the film Toretto’s seeks revenge for the murder of his beloved. When it is reveal that Fenix is the culprit and is confronted by Toretto about the murder Fenix replies coldly, “I wrecked her car. Do you remember her face? huh? Cuz I don’t. Last time I saw it, it was burning. Now what?” (min. 107) thus affirming his role as the cinematic, culturally identified killer. That he is detained by O’Conner long enough to have his body smashed into another car by Toretto is seen as a heroic, apex-like victory rather than a vicious murder speaks more to the construction of the film, and

the direction Lin intended throughout much of the film.



Figure 23: Afro-Cuban Villain Fenix, played by Laz Alonso, just after he has been dispatched by Toretto's F-Bomb vehicle, in the 2009 film *Fast & Furious*

For Lin, brown bodies are exotic, consumable, and function as the primary sites for allowed violence to occur without fear of espousing remorse from its viewers. Yet, for all of his cinematic shortcomings, it should be noted that as a director Lin is consistent with his directorial approaches. Brown bodies are fast and furiously expendable.

Considering briefly the implications of violence throughout both films, and their relation with viewers, Grodal's observations that "exposure to the violence in film and television may enhance violent behavior" (11) by audiences, conversations about who become the recipients of these violent acts becomes much more significant. For Grodal, the consumption of violence enhances a viewer's proclivity to act out. Keeping our observation on Fenix as a visual point of reference, the acts of violence that are committed to the brown bodies of the *Fast & Furious*-Juvenal the gang member, played by Cesar Garcia, who is chased and thrown off a building, Letty, played by Michelle Rodriguez, is chased and gunned down, Fenix's death, Braga's arrest- and their relationship or association with villainy normalize the idea that their passings, as violent as they are, are justified-. Moreover, those who choose to act out violent against Chicana

and Latinx populations in the U.S. might assume their actions socially justified. Nevins calls this justification the “normalization of violence” which “emerges out of a web of complex social relations” (16), and is predicated upon “structural or embedded forms” (4) of expression like film. For Nevins violence enacted upon bodies of color that occurs in society or is seen in films has become socially and structurally normalized and therefore consumable.

Conversely, while the role of violence is a genre identifier in *Machete*, the act of violence that occur complicated the ideas of the normalization of violence on brown bodies. In fact, throughout much of the film, the agents of violence are constructed as White dominant Anglo Americans like Senator McLaughlin who violently assassinates undocumented persons crossing the border, and the senator’s advisor Jeff Fahey’s character Booth, who seeks to kill Machete. Rather than glorify these character as heroic, as is done in *Fast & Furious*, both are killed in significant, politically charged ways. Having been exposed as a killer, senator McLaughlin kills Booth, and is later dropped along the Texas/Mexican border in “Mexican garb”. Taken to be an undocumented person, the senator is chased by Anglo vigilantes and shot multiple times. What is most striking about this particular scene is that although he is not immediately dispatched the shots he does receive leave him unable to speak and plead his case. Comically, as the senator lays on the fence he is asked, “You can’t speak English, can you, boy?” (min. 138). Unable to answer the senator is shot again and dies on the U.S.-Mexican border; killed by the very hate group he was a member of. And while the visual act itself is undoubtedly violent, the inversion of the violence makes new or estranges viewer ideas about who the agents of violence are and how these agents are removed from the film. The cinematic blue print that *Machete* introduces as an alternative trope to consider; the dominant Anglo aggressor un-heroically receiving his comeuppance. Unfortunately, while the senator is killed, it should be noted that his assumed

identity is that of an undocumented person crossing into the U.S. Nevertheless, the effect is not lost on audiences.



Figure 24: Senator McLaughlin, after being mistaken for an undocumented individual, is shot, falls on an electrified border fence and dies.

The expendability of brown bodies throughout *Fast & Furious*, linguistically and physically highlight a cinematic blueprint whereby the tried and true types and tropes about Chicanxs and Latinxs are sustained as normalized iterations. However, this chapter also identified how the work of Robert Rodriguez via *Machete* has begun, in part, to shift audience's understandings of what it means to engage a film by and about Chicanxs and Latinxs. Indeed, by “enstranging objects” like Spanish-English code-switching and associating it, in part, with current American politics Rodriguez is in effect “complicating the form” (Cinema 6), of Chicanxs and Latinxs in cinema, and inviting audience to engage them in new ways. When asked about how Chicane and Latinx individuals made their way into his films Rodriguez himself noted, “You write what you know. So even though you're not intending to write a Latin character, because it will be based on yourself or your family or someone you know, most of the time, if not all the time, it's probably going to be a Latin Character” (Cinema 141). What's more, Rodriguez also goes on to acknowledge that “the problem I had when I went to Hollywood was

that there were no Latinos working in Hollywood. It's a very reactive business. It's not really innovative. Someone had to be the first" (141).

What is most striking about Rodriguez's comments is that in working to create mainstream Hollywood films the act of creation itself was a process of enstrangement. By this I mean that Rodriguez's attempts to bring his cinematic ideas to the silver screen his filmic blueprints were, like his content, complicating established norms regarding the kinds of roles that Chicanxs and Latinxs could play. So, when fashioning heroes for a film like *Machete*, Rodriguez's did not allow himself to stay within the confines of Hollywood's expectations and use white actors in brown face-, for example. Thus, in fashioning his film Rodriguez "create(s) additional conventionalized layers of meaning" (Gutierrez-Rexach 100) throughout the film that engage issues surrounding undocumented immigration, English-only sentiments, and dirty politics within a U.S. border. All issues that he grew up associated with. Moreover, these unconventional layers of meaning that this chapter has sought to tease out in Rodriguez's film and highlight an estranged *mexicanidad* that does not quite fit within the terminological confines of scholars like Ramirez-Berg, Limón, and others. Whereas Lin's renditions of *mexicanidad* or *latinidad* are easily identifiable throughout his films. *Machete* *enstranges* our engagement with Chicanx and Latinxs in significant and meaningful ways.

Through Rodriguez's various cinematic blueprinting movements *Machete* functions as a film that works to create a unique narrative space that estranges audience's relationship to the film and reorients their expectations of *mexicanidad* via code-switching and political discourse. By choosing to work through language, and political issues that deviated away from expected cinematic norms, Rodriguez presented audiences with a film about *mexicanidad* that does not rely on salsa and merengue music to play them in and in *Fast & Furious*, or rely on stereotypical

tropes of Chicanxs and Latinxs as 21st century bandidos. For Rodriguez, what the aforementioned devices produce is an estranged *mexicanidad* that pushes the boundaries of cinematic conventions and associates itself with new iterations of heroism and production that move beyond historically traditional Chicanx films that focused on resisting socio-political oppression, and effective code-switching. Perhaps most importantly Rodriguez's *Machete* unabashedly presents a blueprint mode of analysis in which *mexicanidad* signifies characters who are aware of their political power and influence and use it to enact political changes throughout the film. By this I mean that instead of creating a film that seeks only to resist dominant American ideas of Latinidad in film, *Machete* introduces ways of creating progressive change. Through the movements of estrangement Rodriguez projects *mexicanidad* as positively positioned on both sides of the Texas- Mexico border, while at the same time complicating the role of American politics on both sides of the border as well. Through the cinematic process of estrangement Rodriguez presents an American film about Mexicans that is a far cry from the *Mexicano* impersonating, mariachi suit wearing, burro riding representation of *mexicanidad* that is persistently presented as the cinematic norm of *lo mexicano* and presents *Machete*, a film that works to reintroduce audiences to an alternative idea of what *mexicanidad* can look and sound like in the movies.

CHAPTER 5

I'm Picking up Good (Vibe)rations: The Hopeful Progression of Chicanx and Latinx Trajectories in U.S. American Narrative

In 2014 the broadcast television series *The Flash* sped into our living rooms on the CW channel. Originally released as a comic book series in 1940 by writer Gardner Fox and artist Harry Lampert, the 21st century television series brings to life one of DC comics' greatest speedsters, Barry Allen. The Flash, who is played by Grant Gustin, and a small group of STAR Lab employees team up to save the residents of Central City from villainous modified human beings that are referred to in the series as meta-humans. While Barry is a heroic meta-human whose superpowers allow him to run at speeds of up to Mach 3, his team back at the lab work to figure out how to modify Barry's speed to stop the various villains that appear throughout the series. And while this dissertation has already discussed in detail superheroes in comic books and graphic novels, my concluding chapter will pay close attention and remain faithful to the television series. By the I mean that while *The Flash* comics offer significant sources of analysis and continued research, this chapter will rely on the television series and its characters as the primary markers of analysis. One character in particular named Francisco "Cisco" Ramon, played by Carlos Valdes, introduces an interesting caveat for scholars interested in the constructions, presentations, and reception of Chicanx and Latinx characters in the 21st century. The significance of Cisco Ramon's presence is compounded by the revelation to audiences that Cisco Ramon himself is endowed with a set of superpowers and is also a meta-human in the narrative storyworld of *The Flash*. Thus, my concluding chapter will take a brief look at the constantly changing role of Cisco Ramon throughout the series with an eye towards better

understanding the complicated struggle of enstranging Chicanx and Latinx characters in dominant American narrative spaces.

Introduced in the pilot episode, Cisco Ramon is the lead engineer at STAR Labs, and his primary responsibility is “to make the toys” (S.1 E.1 min 19) that Barry relies on throughout the series. These toys included modified weapons, state of the art tools and gadgets and the like, which often require Ramon’s extremely advanced intelligence. Ramon is also responsible for making the Flash suit, coming up with quick plans of action, and aiding the group as much as he can. What is compelling, however, is that, from the onset, Ramon’s narrative character construction at once works to fulfill and complicate the role of Chicanx and Latinx characters that are often constructed and presented in American broadcast television. By this I mean that while this dissertation as often explored how a particular work succeeds or fails to construct Chicanx and/or Latinx characters in various types of American narratives, Cisco Ramon is a character that complicates and at times rejects dominant American expectations of socially assumed roles of Chicanxs and Latinxs, while also reifying some of the tropes that are often used to overtly identify and subjugate Chicanx and Latinx characters. Thus, Cisco Ramon offers viewers a glimpse of a progressive Latinx character that, although not fully dissimilated from perceived norms, nevertheless complicates such roles in American narratives like television.

Beginning with observations of the latter, Cisco Ramon’s intellectual role in the series immediately complicates our expectations of his role in the series. Staffed as an engineer, Ramon’s intelligence is often placed on full display as he works to construct meta-human capturing devices as fast as he possibly can. Indeed, like other characters explored throughout this dissertation, Ramon’s intelligence and significant role on team Flash appear to dissociate him from the history of listed stereotypes that scholars like Charles Tatum and Charles Ramirez-

Berg have explored in their works like the already mentioned bandido or the male buffoon who is defined as “simpleminded, he cannot master standard English, and he childishly regresses into emotionality” (Ramirez-Berg 72). Cisco Ramon is none of these. In fact, his intelligence and sharp wit are what the Flash and his team often rely on. Yet, when the “stereotype communication test” (19), as Ramirez-Berg aptly calls it, is conducted on Ramon, his Spanish-English code-switching bilinguality effectively “outs” him as a phenotypic and cultural Latinx character. In episode 16 of season 1, for example, a kidnapped Ramon and his brother utilize their Spanish language as communicative code that allows them to form a plan of action and escape. Thus, while Ramon complicates the ideas of a Latinx character by not fitting into assumed and often overused dominant types he is nevertheless cast as an identifiable Other regardless of his intelligence.

Moreover, while Ramon complicates and resists moves to place him firmly within a specific or particular type of Latinx identitarian locale, he is nevertheless cast as a secondary, or sidekick type of character in relation to the show’s hero. Intellectually, Ramon’s boss Dr. Harrison Wells, played by Tom Cavanagh, is constantly critical of Ramon’s work and usually offers the necessary caveats that push Ramon’s projects to new heights. While Ramon is mostly successful, the relationship he maintains with Dr. Wells situates him as Dr. Wells’ intellectual subordinate. Likewise, while many of Ramon’s engineering ideas and quick thinking come to fruition and aid the Flash during his battles, Ramon maintains a secondary role throughout the first season. While Ramon and his teammates are integral pieces of the Flash’s success, and also steer the overall narrative, he and his teammates remain secondary actors throughout the series. In relation to viewers, Ramon’s significance as a character becomes more and more pronounced as Ramon and the team learn that he does have superpowers after all.

That Ramon is revealed to have his own set of superpowers continues to push at the boundaries of what Chicanx and Latinx characters can and should be in U.S. American narraives. Gifted with abilities that he does not fully understand, viewers journey with Ramon as he works to better utilize and control the full potential of his superpowers, and what his superpowers mean for team Flash. For Ramon the revelation that he has superpowers in season 1 episode 23, is confirmed and shared openly with teammates early in season 2 of the series. Ramon's powers, however, become a worrisome struggle because of his desire to remain a morally good hero. What Ramon and audiences learn together, though, is that his superpowers actually allow him to "tap into the multidimensional energies between earths, he [can] see through dimensions, view, and manipulate his molecular surroundings to create directional, weapon-like vibrational bursts out of his hands. Really painful ones" (S.2 E19 min. 10). And although Ramon constantly struggles with the very idea of having powers, as season 2 progresses his super abilities become an almost indispensable resource for team Flash because of his ability to "open a breach to any earth he wants" (S.2 E 19 min. 11) in *The Flash* storyworld. That Ramon, who gives himself the superhero name Vibe, can open breaches to other earths becomes a significantly important ability for the Flash narrative because Ramon becomes the only person, meta-human or otherwise, who grants the Flash access to the various earths that comprise the multiverse.



Figure 25: Francisco Ramon opening inter-dimensional borders as Vibe in the CW series *The Flash*

By this I mean that while the Flash is able to manipulate the linear timelines of the past, present, and future, his is bound to one earth with no way of getting to other dimensional earths without Vibe's abilities. Vibe becomes the only point of access for team Flash to save people in other worlds. The growth of Ramon's range of powers, in relation to superhero studies, should not be glossed over. Adilifu Nama reminds us of such a significance when, speaking about Black superheroes, he admits that because of the Black superhero Falcon from the Marvel universe, "I was able to imagine myself as a superhero, rising above my socioeconomic environment, beating the neighborhood bullies, commanding respect from my...peers, and enjoying approval" (2). For Nama, to identify a superhero that he could relate to granted him the opportunity to hope and daydream about challenging very real, social, economic and community oppression that resulted with him having a 'less than' mentality of himself. For Chicanx and Latinx viewers, Ramon introduces a 21st century superhero who, like Falcon, can illicit the same kinds of responses from its viewers. Vibe is a phenotypically brown person of color whose inclusion on the show

and position in the Flash storyworld complicate and resist the historically depredating, and historically stereotyped Chicanx and Latinx characters. Because Vibe carries such significance for viewers in general it becomes inoperative to explore the extent of how Vibe and his powers function. By this I mean that while the revelation of his power are great talking points that identify a Latinx hero, I wish to spend the remainder of my time examining how Vibe's powers are used and what the implications are for viewers, Latinx or otherwise.

As Vibe learns to manipulate his powers to shoot pulses at enemies and to open breaches on other Earths, Ramon becomes a crucial character that progresses the narrative timeline of the television series. From a Chicano/Latino Studies perspective, the fact that this particular ability is associated with the Latinx character Vibe draws lines of academic comparison to Anzaldúa's ideas, and writings concerning borderlands. While much has already been written by scholars like Cherríe Moraga and Sonia Salídivar-Hull, to name but a few, Anzaldúa's iterations of borderlands still offer us a correlational avenue that allows to better understand the significance of Vibe's powers in relation to Chicanx and Latinx characters and their audiences. For Anzaldúa, the borderlands are "*una herida abierta*" (3) that often "hemorrhages..., the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country-a border culture", and its inhabitants include "in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal"" (3). For Anzaldúa, the borderlands are a space where US American Others can find a locational respite various social, gendered, and governmental oppressors. In the narrative world of *The Flash* the borderlands are not geographic locations, but rather multidimensional avenues whereby those who exist outside of the normal can pass. That Vibe, a code-switching Latinx Other with superpowers, is the only one who can access these multiverse borderlands, pushes me to assert that Vibe exists as a Superheroic borderlander.

While Anzaldúa's borderlands are comprised of only two worlds merging, Vibe's powers allow him to open up border crossing locations to as many worlds as he'd like. Thus, throughout season 2 of the series Vibe's powers allow the Flash to zoom through the multiverse saving his friends and enacting moral justice. The borderlands that Vibe is able to open and manipulate are no longer due to the clashes between two worlds, but rather a conscious manipulation of them. Vibe is a character who is at once a borderlands inhabitant and the borderlands bridge that is used to cross into and out of various Earths in the multiverse. Aside from functioning as the only conduit of passage for team Flash, however, the continued reticence Vibe has to use his powers likewise underscore the pain and fear, or hemorrhaging as Anzaldúa calls it, that are often associated with merging worlds. For Vibe, his reticence stems from his fear that by opening breaches in the multiverse he will allow the killer speedster and the Flash's nemesis Zoom onto his Earth. Thus, Vibe seeks to police his powers by resisting the Flash's pleas to allow him to cross between worlds. Ultimately however, Vibe's heroic desires get the better of him, and he agrees to open breaches to save human lives.



Figure 26: Ramon, inside the inter-dimensional borders, as the borderlands crosser

In essence, what Vibe affords Chicano/Latino Studies scholars is a character who

enstranges, or makes new our own limitations and parameters of analysis as we continue to engage borderlands theory and scholarship. By positioning Vibe as a 21st century borderlands inhabitant, crosser and bridge. This brief analysis underscores that although Vibe is a Chicana/Latina character whose role is a complicated construction within dominant US American narratives, he nevertheless offers hopeful, progressive spaces of academic exploration that, like historical antecedents in Chicano/Latino Studies, offer rich areas of continued and focused analysis. What Vibe's complicated construction also reveals is that our work, the work of Chicano/Latino scholars is not complete. Like Vibe, we must continue to open up the breaches of academic areas of study and expose, critique, examine and make new what lies on the other side of this dominant Anglo, narrative corner of the multiverse.

This idea of what is being made new or estranged in Chicano/Latino Studies has driven and continues to drive my academic analysis throughout my dissertation and current scholarship. In chapter 1, for example, I explore the limits of Indigenous constructions from the 1960s to the present. Beginning with Corky Gonzales's epic *Yo Soy Joaquín* by excavating the two spirit identification that the poem's narrator makes about themselves. While this poem has historically been understood as having "articulated an explicitly nationalist identity and ideology" (Noriega xxvii), my chapter complicated such iterations, by contending that because Joaquín does not shy away from identifying as both male and female throughout much of his poem he/she is actually embracing an indigenous two-spirit identity that estranges our current understandings of the poem's role as a nationalist narrative. By positioning Joaquín as a two-spirit narrator this chapter used the threads of indigenism as a historical correlation that passed into the work of the subsequent scholars like Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: La Frontera* and directors like Robert Rodriguez's *From Dusk 'Till Dawn*. Moreover, this chapter also sought to map out how the

threads of indigenism continue to make their way into various American narrative forms like literature and film. By tracing the role of indigenism chapter one concludes by exploring Peter Bratt's film *La Mission* and postulating that as we engage indigenism in our specific areas of study we should be mindful of how it shapes our current understandings and conversations in areas of gender, sexuality and identitarian constructions in Chicano/Latino studies.

Continuing with the treads of identitarian analysis, chapter 2 explored the concepts of enstrangement further and in relation to Science Fiction. Critically examining the works of the formalist critics Lee T. Lemon and Marion J Reis along side the work of Darko Suvin, chapter 2 turned to an examination of formal devices like phenotype and language in the science fictional television series. Beginning with late 20th century film *Men in Black* as a referential point of science fictional constructions of Chicanx and Latinx characters, this chapter critically examines *The Event* and *Caprica* as a way of better understand how directors Evan Katz and Ronald D. Moore, respectively, utilize language and phenotype to construct televisual storyworlds that project to viewer's ideas about Chicanxs and Latinxs. Moreover, this chapter also offered analysis on the significance and influence that soundscapes have in shaping audience's perceptions of characters. By working through both television series, chapter 2 points out that while both directors had many opportunities to estrange the roles of their multilingual characters of color, they chose to work within the assumed confines of a dominant Anglo American frame of viewership. The result of such work is that for American viewing audience's extra-terrestrials like the Mike the alien in *Men in Black* and the Adama family in *Caprica* and the Afro-Cuban American President Elias Martinez "now symbolize real-life aliens-documented and undocumented immigrants who have entered, and continue to enter the US" (Ramirez-Berg 157).

Chapter 3 continues to maintain the threads of phenotype as important markers of identification when exploring the graphic works *DjangoZorro* and *Red Wolf* comic series. Focusing primarily on the indigenous Yaqui woman Conchita in *DjangoZorro* and sheriff's deputy Daniela Ortiz, this chapter contends that by paying close attention to the coloring of both characters throughout their respective stories we uncover a deliberate correlation between whiteness and power. Beginning with Conchita, reader's follow her journey as this phenotypically dark brown orphan girl from the borderlands of Arizona is taken in by a patron and sent to the finest schools in Spain. While she is away her patron trumps up a historical Spanish lineage, which claims that Conchita is actually part of an aristocratic family. Upon her return, however, the newly christened Doña has been phenotypically colored lighter than her former self, and is soon after presented to readers in multiple colors. This struggle with phenotype is narratively identified through her difficult relationship with language as although she is a bilingual Spanish speaking woman she is told to speak English only. When Conchita finally relinquishes her power as the graphic novel ends she is overcome by her darker phenotype and resembles the pre-Spanish Conchita of her youth. Like Conchita, sheriff's deputy Ortiz although a member of the law is frequently cast as a phenotypically darker character than many of the hero's she is surrounded by including the Indigenous character Red Wolf himself. When deputy Ortiz is finally promoted to Sheriff, she, like Conchita, is colored as phenotypically lighter to the point where she looks like a white person. While this chapter identifies the obvious failures of both colorists, this chapter contends that by reading the phenotypic readings of both character as a type of paratextual analysis, both comics make new our engagements of comic character while at the same time pushing the boundaries of paratextual analysis further than they have gone before.

The final chapter of this dissertation continues to explore what is made new in Chicano/Latino studies by placing the 2010 film *Machete* along side the 2009 film *Fast & Furious*. Turning to an examination of their filmic blueprints and the role of code-switching in both films, this chapter explores how director Robert Rodriguez is able to complicate traditional iterations of Chicanx and Latinx characters in film via his use of actors. Moreover, his inclusion and, more specifically, his directional use of code-switching in the film is another marker of the film that works to complicate traditional constructions Chicanx and Latinx characters in Hollywood films. Where Rodriguez succeeds, however, director Justin Lin fails. Examining how Lin constructs his filmic blueprint and utilizes code-switching throughout his film, chapter 5 points out that while Chicanxs and Latinxs play significant roles in the film, they are bound to Hollywood's expectations of brown characters and through stereotypic bandito epitomized by the character Braga. Moreover, for Lin brown bodies are the expendable and become the approved sites of violence throughout much of the film.

That this dissertation ends with the brief, complicated analysis of the Francisco "Vibe" Ramon, attests to the reality that while Chicanx and the Latinx characters continue to function as sites of oppressions, omission and violence, there are some American narratives that introduce to us new way of the engaging, examining and writing about Chicanx and Latinx character. While this dissertation has turned to the works of the early both century Russian Formalists Shklovsky's idea of enstrangement, it speaks to the truly interdisciplinary nature, capacity and capability of Chicano/Latino Studies as a growing and significant area of study. Furthermore, while this dissertation has sought to offer new nuggets of research and knowledge, it has also worked to critique those areas of American narrative that, even in the 21st century, continue to rehash historically troubling renditions of Chicanx and Latinx characters. This dissertation

reminds us that when it comes to the study of the Chicanx and Latinx constructions in American narratives there is still much work to be done.

ENDNOTES

ENDNOTES

1. Jason Mittell talks of the importance of paying close attention to such televisual elements when he notes that, “Being aware of formal elements allows for a more sophisticated understanding of programming. Just as learning the intricacies of any sport’s rules and techniques helps you appreciate an exceptional athletic performance or game plan, knowing how television programs communicate enables a more nuanced appreciation of texts that are particularly effective, compelling or aesthetically ambitious. Formal awareness also allows for a heightened critical perspective on the creations of meanings” (161). As viewers, we recognize the morphology, cognition, and emotion systems of the characters on earth and *Caprica* as resembling humans; we recognize objects as like those we may use in our everyday life. However, the way that Katz and Moore choose to organize these objects and portray its characters is part of a reorganization of such building blocks of reality—reconstruct, if you will—in such a way that moves audiences to think and feel in specifically directed ways. That is, while *Caprica* and *The Event* abide by principles of realism (even if extrapolated as a realism of the proximate and distant future), they are in the end willful reconstructions.
2. Miriam Jimenez Roman and Juan Flores define the Afro-Latino in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* as a people “of African descent in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and by extension those of African descent in the United States whose origins are in Latin America and the Caribbean” (1).
3. Aldama, in discussing gaps, notes that “[T]he filmmaker provides the blueprint, but, of course, this means that there are gaps to be filled by the audience. If it were not so, then it would no longer be a blueprint, but a one- to-one mapping of the whole territory” (103).
4. Sociologist Laurie Kay Sommers in her article “Inventing Latinismo: The Creation of ‘Hispanic’ Panethnicity in the United States” notes that salsa in particular “has continued to be the dominant public symbol of Latinoismo, if not Chicanismo” because “salsa’s power as a Latino music derives from its dancability, Spanish lyrics, and long history within Latino communities” (42).
5. H. Porter Abbott states in the second edition of *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (2008) that the storyworld is “the diegesis or world in which the story takes place” (242).

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