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# Domestic Violence and Empire: Legacies of Conquest in Mexican American Writing

Leigh Johnson

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 (for Sonia Saldivar-Hull)

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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND EMPIRE:  
LEGACIES OF CONQUEST IN  
MEXICAN AMERICAN WRITING**

**BY**

**LEIGH JOHNSON**

**B.A., International Affairs, Lewis & Clark College, 2001  
M.A., English, Western Kentucky University, 2005**

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
English**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May 2011**

**DEDICATION**

To the memory of Dr. Hector Torres and Stefania Grey.

To my boys.

For all the women, men, and children who have been silenced by domestic violence.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation posits that writers can symbolically represent domestic violence to critique unjust gender relations as well as iniquitous US policy toward Mexican Americans. I use the term domestic violence because it most closely describes the double voiced discourse women engage to critique communities that condone violence against women as well as a country that perpetrates violence against Mexican Americans within its borders. Put broadly, domestic violence refers to threats of sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse within the home. Furthermore, patriarchal control over women's agency, sexuality, and mobility in turn-of-the-century texts also indicates domestic violence through social and historical conditions. Violence is especially evident throughout this project as women's rights challenge patriarchal structures and civil rights challenge racist policies. Revealing the perilous gains of women and Mexican

Americans, social backlash encourages explosions of domestic violence. For this reason, each chapter explores the historical and social contexts surrounding scenes of domestic violence. Mexican American women remain tenuously between the spaces of home and nation as they experience domestic violence from state and familial institutions. Because these women are not safe within their homes, they have to participate in a broader societal push to define, describe, and defend themselves against domestic violence. Their resistance comes with a price—women, especially women of color, who resist patriarchal violence may be seen as cultural traitors, exposing their men to criticism from dominant society.

The first chapter shows how women’s speech both uncovers and masks narratives of domestic violence through allegory using the testimonios taken for the Bancroft project on California history. The second chapter examines how the historical romance genre incorporates scenes of domestic violence against women’s protected space in the home and nation. The third chapter reveals how representations of domestic violence within Mexico reflect colonial anxieties about conquest and domestic policy. American travel writers’ encounters with domestic violence in Mexico reflect the anxieties surrounding American entitlement to Mexico and the bodies of the people living there. The fourth chapter observes limitations on women’s ability to leave violent situations within the home or the nation. This chapter utilizes scenes by Mexican American men, as they write about (and blame women for) domestic violence. The fifth chapter celebrates women writers’ activism through literary motherwork. Though these texts, with the exception of the last chapter, precede the Chicano Movement, they are politically engaged in a struggle to define and defend *la raza* through their intellectual agendas.



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## Introduction: Domestic Violence in the Home and Nation

The 1956 film *Salt of the Earth*, which has been used in women's studies and Chicano studies classes to show emergent race and gender identification, contains a poignant scene of domestic violence. Based on the miners' strike in Grant County, New Mexico, the film features the personal story of Esperanza and Ramón Quintero. The 1950s were a volatile time for labor unions in New Mexico, because following World War II, women had to be convinced to return to the home and new social restrictions had to be placed on men who might have been in integrated units during the war. The Mexican American miners find themselves unable to endure the low wages and occupational hazards of life in the mines. The men strike, but when the injunction comes against them, and Ramón and the other men are arrested, their wives take up their places on the picket line. After Ramón loses his job, and the women, including his wife, take up the picket line, he threatens to slap her mouth. Esperanza rejects his violent overtones and says that she will no longer live by the "old way." In the film, she does not turn her face away from him; instead, she keeps eye contact and challenges him to actually slap her. After a tense moment with both characters exuding stubbornness, Ramón backs down and turns his own face away from her in shame that he ever would have been violent toward her. Esperanza's stature grows in this scene. Her rejection of domestic violence as the "old way" symbolizes a movement away from silencing women by shutting their mouths and suggests that the "old way" of Mexican American workers being exploited for their labor and silenced by the union is also passé. By standing up for herself, Esperanza explicitly rejects the old ways—violence, intimidation, and submission—of

gender relationships within the home. Her experience with public violence, like that she sees on the picket line, convinces her that she need not be a victim in her home or in the world. Beyond domestic violence, the film reveals how women's work is also political, as shown in Lillian Robinson's comment, "Ramón's realization that the women's demand for running water was indeed a statement about working conditions, even about occupational health and safety, that it too was „real“ politics" (180). She goes on to explain that the film makes an effort "to stress that the most oppressive aspects of sexist domination within the Chicano family are not intrinsic to the miners' ethnic culture but come from the power structure of society" (182). After all, it is not that the miners refuse to allow their wives to work; rather, the segregated occupational and social conditions of the town are what have most significantly curtailed women's opportunities. Some of the husbands' reluctance to have their wives on the picket line is further explained by their fear that they will be emasculated by "trading places" with their wives. The men fear retaliation for the picket, not from their wives, but from a dominant society that has already disenfranchised them. This interpretation matches the intersectionality of the narrative. The story of the community includes women, Mexican Americans, miners, organizers, children, and the unrelenting capitalist, racist, patriarchal system of the 1950s they are rebelling against. Historical conditions shaped the film, and contemporary social conditions shape how current scholars receive the film.

The above scene of double-voiced discourse<sup>1</sup> around domestic violence illustrates a central tenet of my dissertation: it posits that writers can symbolically represent domestic violence to critique unjust gender relations as well as iniquitous US policy toward Mexican Americans. The term "domestic violence" is of course anachronistic for

any text written before 1975 when an article in the *New York Times* first identified domestic violence as a “public issue” rather than a “private problem” and said that battering was not only dangerous for women but that men were likely to “wind up in the morgue” as a result of beating their wives (Martin 29). Before 1975, wife-beating was a more commonly accepted term, and the issue did not seem to be a social problem to policy makers. American literature proves that women cared about domestic violence, writing about it as early as 1834 in narratives about the frontier and probably earlier. In recent years, “intimate partner violence” or “family violence” has entered the lexicon as terms that include violence within same-sex couples, couples that do not live together, and within families that affects children or men. For this project, I use the term domestic violence because it most closely describes the double-voiced discourse women engage to critique communities that condone violence against women as well as a country that perpetrates violence against Mexican Americans within its borders. Or, as Mikhail Bakhtin might put it, the women are inserting a new semantic meaning to conditions of domestic violence that already exist (189).

Put broadly, domestic violence refers to threats of sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse within the home. Furthermore, patriarchal control over women’s agency, sexuality, and mobility in turn-of-the-century texts also indicates domestic violence through social and historical conditions. Because domestic violence often moves in lockstep with expectations about women’s roles and responsibilities, the ways in which it manifests on the female body varies with changing expectations about women’s place in society. Violence is especially evident throughout my project as women’s rights challenge patriarchal structures and civil rights challenge racist policies. When progress

seems most within reach, often violence appears most severe. Revealing the perilous gains of women and Mexican Americans, social backlash encourages explosions of domestic violence. For this reason, each chapter explores the historical and social contexts surrounding scenes of domestic violence.

I began to think about the ways that Mexican American women write about domestic violence after encountering Amy Kaplan's discussion of "Manifest Domesticity" in *The Anarchy of Empire*. She uses texts from the 1830s to 1850s to show how women's sphere of domesticity actually helps tame a foreign landscape. Especially interesting is her following discussion: "*Domestic* has a double meaning that links the space of the familial household to that of the nation, by imagining both in opposition to everything outside the geographic and conceptual border of the home [...] Domesticity, furthermore, refers not to a static condition, but to a process of domestication, which entails conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien" (25). She refers to mostly white American women writing from the frontier. Their writing underscores how celebration of the women's sphere preserved domestic interests against the foreign. I am interested in how Mexican American women's writing contests the very category of foreign, even as it reveals violence within the domestic space. While domestic, then, has a double meaning that separates out the foreign as well as women's spaces, these meanings can also collapse back into each other with regard to minority discourse that sees both the domestic and the foreign as marginalized citizens of the nation. Furthermore, Mexican American women remain tenuously between the spaces of home and nation as they experience domestic violence from state and familial institutions. Violent patriarchal behavior has always existed in the domestic sphere. Because these

women are not safe within their homes, they have to participate in a broader societal push to define, describe, and defend themselves against domestic violence. Their resistance comes with a price—women, especially women of color, who resist patriarchal violence may be seen as cultural traitors, exposing their men to criticism from dominant society.<sup>2</sup>

While Mexican American women have a vested interest in writing about domestic violence, other writers have targeted Mexican American women (and sometimes men) in their writing about domestic violence. Often, the way that men write about domestic violence implicates women in their own subjugation, while Anglo American women writing about Mexican American domestic violence often blame cultural codes, locating domestic violence squarely within an ethnic identity rather than seeing it as a social or historical problem. For Anglo American men, their depictions of domestic violence against Mexican Americans reveal deep anxieties about masculinity, economics, and cultural appropriation. Consequently, while the focus of this project is mainly Mexican American women's writing, I examine texts outside that category to shed light on how the women use nuanced and double-voiced discourse.

By drawing on a variety of genres and time periods, I show how personal and fictional narratives interact with a national literary narrative. I draw on Priscilla Wald's discussion in her introduction to *Constituting Americans* when she claims:

National narratives actually shape personal narratives by delineating the cultural practices through which personhood is defined. The role of married women or the rights of indigenous peoples are examples of how a culture, through its institutions and its conventions, defines individuals' existence—defines, that is,

how they will experience and understand themselves as people and as part of a people. (4)

For Mexican Americans writing about domestic violence, the stakes are high. They seek to insert (and code) their personal stories into a national narrative that from the beginning attempts to disenfranchise them. Domestic violence is an intimate part of the personal and the national narrative because it defines cultural expectations and practices as well as calls into question how women of color understand themselves as part of a people. Identity within the nation is at least as important as identity within the home. Women refuse to quietly remove themselves to the private sphere and suffer national and personal indignities in silence.

The first chapter, “Testimonios of Domestic Violence,” shows how women’s speech both uncovers and masks narratives of domestic violence through allegory. Rosalía Vallejo says in her testimonio that she must “resort to tricks” to keep herself and the other women in her house safe from rape. The Bancroft project of interviews of Californios forms the basis of the chapter, as almost all the women’s testimonios invoke some narrative of domestic violence that contain allegorical implications for domestic policy after the US invasion of California. Many of these narratives focus on marriage and land loss, people names and place names, all of which point to and demand a connection between the domestic home and the domestic nation. Within each of the texts I examine in this chapter, there is a sense of resorting to verbal “tricks”<sup>3</sup> or wit—the women telling their testimonios use their comments to resist the charges of cultural betrayal from within their communities while at the same time, they resist the imposition of American land laws and treaty violations.

Furthermore, women in later chapters also “resort to tricks” to protect themselves and other women from domestic violence. The phrase “resort to tricks” is what Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz translate Rosalía Vallejo as saying; however in order to avoid negative and trivial connotations, I choose to use the idea (which is still true to her words) “resorting to wits.” This slight shift, which is supported by translation (see endnote 3), underscores how important it was and is for women to avail themselves of the tools they have. Mary Wollstonecraft advocates that women use the presumed weakness of their sex in order to advance their educations and rights, so there is a long history of advocating this kind of behavior. However, the idea becomes distasteful when connected to modern connotations of the word trick, implying sexual deviance and prostitution. These wits or tricks, then, play on stereotypes of women as manipulative or deceitful, but they subvert stereotypes to show how women use the sources of power available to them in order to advance their positions.

The second chapter “Historical Romance and Violence in the Land” examines how the historical romance genre incorporates scenes of domestic violence to allow allegorical readings. The writers selected for this chapter invoke historical narratives and locate domestic violence on women and men’s bodies as well as the landscapes present in the texts.<sup>4</sup> Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*, Gertrude Atherton’s *The Californians*, and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don* all narrate historical romances, mostly through a process of land loss and familial decline. In defending the whiteness of the daughters and, thereby establishing relationships with Anglo men, the writers emasculate the Mexican male body to symbolically blame men for cultural betrayal. The men’s violence toward their families is impotent in the face of the



economic and political violence of the new order. Women must forge their own paths into the new paradigm as these novels use historical narratives to invoke discourses of domesticity at the expense of the decline of the male body (and body politic).

The third chapter, "Foreign Incursions: Tourist Violence in Mexico," examines how representations of domestic violence within Mexico reflect colonial anxieties about conquest and domestic policy. White American writers in Mexico, including Stephen Crane and Katherine Anne Porter, juxtapose Mexican expatriate writer, María Cristina Mena. Issues of tourism, ownership, and cultural violence contribute to the scenes of domestic violence. Crane's work is a product of the propaganda that emerged before, during, and after the US Mexico war. Because the Mexican Revolution informs Mena and Porter's work, it is important to consider it in the background to this chapter. As a civil war, the Mexican Revolution is itself a form of domestic violence, but more importantly, it spurs large-scale Mexican immigration and a Mexican vogue in which cultural artifacts hold cache, but Mexican peoples represent unbridled sexuality and dangerous violence within the United States. I'll show how continued invasions of Mexico by the US were informed by popular culture. In this chapter, the focus on US imperialism toward Mexico also appears as a form of cultural imperialism and appropriation. Mena constructs a critique of US imperialism by locating the roots of cultural imperialism in domestic space. As Mena's heroine, Petra, sympathetically resorts to her wits to subvert violence, she counters the disdain with which the American writers seem to think about sly Mexican subterfuge that tricks the Anglo hero. American encounters with domestic violence in Mexico reflect the anxieties surrounding American entitlement to Mexico and the bodies of the people living there.

The fourth chapter “She’s Causing a Scene (of Domestic Violence)” examines limitations on women’s ability to leave violent situations within the home or the nation. This chapter utilizes scenes by Mexican American men, as they write about (and blame women for) domestic violence. This chapter historically contextualizes these scenes of domestic violence to illustrate how men respond to social and economic pressures that encouraged women to work outside the home. Each of these scenes polices the boundaries of Mexican American women’s behavior in ways that implicate women in their own subjugation, especially with regard to charges of cultural betrayal; but in the process, they narrate the conditions of an emergent Chicana identity. Women in this chapter use their wits to assert power in a narrative that gives them little. Their ability to use language to subvert violence shows the emergent Chicana voice. Furthermore, the scenes pathologize violence against women in suggesting that the women desire or “ask for” domestic violence, at the same time they seem to show how perceptions of the Mexican American community paint men as enforcers of machismo, so that the violence comes from within the community and from the mainstream representations of Mexican American men and women.

The fifth chapter “Mother Works: Domestic Violence Globalized” shows how women writers have responded to the tactic of keeping women in the home through widespread threats of violence to women’s bodies and lives. This chapter establishes a concrete link between domestic violence within the home and domestic violence with regard to foreign and domestic policy but goes beyond this subtext to show how a new paradigm emerges from the allegory. Women in this chapter engage in motherwork as a response to domestic violence. Women have to resort to wits to protect themselves and

their families, and these skills they develop form the basis for radical Chicana activism that furthers the interests of and possibilities for the community. Women's bodies bear the brunt of domestic violence, but the narratives critique machismo as well as the social and economic conditions that create the capacity for domestic violence in the men perpetuating it. These conditions stem from globalization, yet the response to them begins locally and extends through networks of motherwork that link first and third world Chicana feminists. Or, as I'll discuss in the chapter, the ways that liminal spaces of first and third world feminisms are part of what Emma Pérez terms "third-space feminism," or really, as she says the ability to see their feminism comes from acknowledging when and how "Women were left out and could speak only within and from interstitial spaces" (33).

Though these texts, with the exception of the last chapter, precede the Chicano Movement, they are politically engaged in a struggle to define and defend *la raza* through their intellectual agendas. Even though "Chicana" as a term may seem anachronistic—akin to domestic violence—to restrict Chicana/o intellectual production to the Chicano Movement is limited and counter-productive, as many scholars have pointed out. In his analysis of Mexican American autobiography, including Vallejo's, for instance, Genaro Padilla discusses the problem that the focus on contemporary writing creates for Chicana/o scholars by having "largely ignored prior personal narrative formations in which ideological complications (historical repression as well as contestatory articulation) comprise the originary worry of autobiographical expression in Mexican American culture" (6). Indeed, the concept of what constitutes Chicana/o (or perhaps more appropriately in the case of theatre, Latino/a) production has also been revived by

Nicolás Kanellos in terms of the theatre when he shows that as early as the 1860s there was “nationalism and community involvement [that] represent the first example of the kind of social responsibility that would characterize Hispanic theatre in the communities of the Southwest, even up to the present” (“Two” 22). Likewise, in his analysis of Spanish-language newspapers, Gabriel Meléndez describes the concept of *una literatura nacional* desired by the *periodiquero* generation as a foundational moment in Chicana/o literature. He explains that this “was less an appeal to nationalism and nation-building than a means to mobilize community resources and engage them in literary codification by which questions of ethnicity, identity, and group participation might reflect the status of Mexican Americans in the national life of the country” (136). As Marisa López rightly describes, it is dangerous to place narrow definitions on Chicana/o literature. The movement to include early Chicana/o literary and political production in conversations about Chicana/o literature, as López does, allows more complete and complex readings of texts within contemporary theoretical frameworks. In doing historical recovery work, Deena González points out, “Chicana is a contemporary term, but can be applied to Spanish-speaking and Mexican-origin women in any area presently considered territory of the United States” (“Chicana” 125). As each of the Mexican American women writers stakes her claim to speech, safety from domestic violence, and community activism, her work supports Chicana challenges to expectations about race and femininity.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I draw here on Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of dialogic, double-voiced discourse that refers to multiple meanings in terms of what is intended in social and historical contexts that are conscious of other people's words and histories, or as Bakhtin puts it, double-voiced discourse inserts "a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own" (189).

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Gloria Anzaldúa remarks, "For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior" (19). Other Chicana feminists discuss this quandary of remaining loyal to the cultural line; as Aída Hurtado puts it in "Sitios y Lenguas: Chicanas Theorize Feminisms," "Skepticism about women has its origins in the cultural and sexual violation of *La Malinche*" (140). She draws on Norma Alarcón's and Emma Pérez's discussions of the image of Malinche as the original traitor to the Chicano people. Women have written away from this assumption by rehabilitating Malinche's image as well as denying that she was a traitor after all—suggesting instead that it was Malinche's people who sold her out. As Katherine Sugg explains in her discussion of how Chicana lesbians specifically deflect charges of cultural betrayal, "Chicana texts have long contested the either/or assumptions behind conventional, masculinist notions of cultural identity and authenticity" (142). Other Chicana feminists who take up this mantle include Cherríe Moraga, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, Gaspar de Alba, Sonia Saldívar-Hull, and others. The widespread treatment of this charge of cultural betrayal reveals how salient it is to a discussion of women, domestic violence, and double-voiced discourses of uncovering problems inside and outside of the community.

<sup>3</sup> Rosalía Vallejo spoke to her interviewer in Spanish, but he wrote her testimonio in English, and destroyed any record (if there ever was one) of what she said in Spanish. The Ruth Beebe and Robert Senkewicz, translators of the testimonios, chose to retranslate Vallejo's words in a way they thought would be truer to her intent. In the 1874 English, Henry Cerruti writes, "by resorting to artifices" (387). The authors retranslate this as "resorting to tricks" (Vallejo 29). My own translation work on this suggests that she may have said any number of words that would be translated by Cerruti as "artifices"—likely she may have said "artificios," "sustantivos," or "destraza." The best translation I can come up with is "mañas"—which can mean tricks, wits, or guile. So the women in the narratives are resorting to their skill or wits.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies* by Mary Pat Brady for discussions of how Chicana writers use space in their texts. Also see María Herrera-Sobek for a discussion of how disease in the physical environment appears on the body of the character.

## Chapter One: Testimonios of Domestic Violence

When Henry Cerruti interviewed Rosalía Vallejo, he did not expect her to be reluctant to talk about John Frémont and the Bear Flag mob. After all, her brother Mariano Vallejo had promised that she would be more than willing to share her memories with him. However, she cut their interview short telling him:

Since I do not wish to detain you any longer, I will end this conversation with this: those hateful men instilled so much hate in me for the people of their race that, even though twenty-eight years have gone by since then, I still cannot forget the insults they heaped upon me. Since I have not wanted to have anything to do with them, I have refused to learn their language. (29)

She sensed that he was not listening to her, so she chose not to speak with him. The resistance could also be in response to her brother's assumption that she would talk with Cerruti because he had said she would. Instead, she suggested that Cerruti interview a servant in her household, Dorotea Valdez. Valdez's interview transpired quite differently. As a servant for the powerful, landowning Vallejos, Valdez had access to and a perspective on information about early California that was valuable to the history Cerruti was collecting, but it was unlikely that many had sought her version of events in the past. She seemed more willing to talk with Cerruti, even if she was concerned about her lack of education:

My education has been very limited, yet my memory is good. I am aware of the fact that you have been sent by a learned man who is focused on the noble objective of writing the true history of this country. I would be very pleased to

provide you with my recollections. You may proceed to ask me questions at your leisure. (34)

While she seems more cooperative, I will show that like all the other women discussed in this chapter, she had an agenda to discuss. Their speech could be described in similar terms to Priscilla Wald's description of Fredrick Douglass's slave narrative: "His discomfort surfaces [...] in textual disruptions: a revealing word, a surprising juxtaposition, an awkward sentence through which the repressed—or suppressed—returns. These disruptions shape his narrative, as they tell an alternative story" (15). I pay special attention to these same kinds of disruptions in the stories the California women tell. Their comments often did not match the questions the interviews asked, and when this happened, the ruptures in the texts reveal the ways that the women saw themselves in relation to patriarchy, capitalism, and Anglo America.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1874 and 1878 Hubert Howe Bancroft's employees, including Henry Cerruti, interviewed seventy-eight people who had lived in California prior to the 1846-48 US-Mexico War. Because Bancroft did not speak Spanish, he hired three men, Cerruti, Thomas Savage, and Vicente Gómez, to collect oral histories and important documents from the Californios as part of a project to produce a definitive history of the region before its Americanization. Savage, probably the most respected by Bancroft, grew up in Cuba. Cerruti, from Italy, was unstable and flamboyant—so much so that when his financial speculations went awry, he overdosed on drugs. Gómez worked for the California government as a witness on land cases in the 1850s, and in a tragic irony, he ultimately lost his own claim (Beebe and Senkewicz xxiv). Bancroft urgently collected as much information as he could about pre-1848 California from people who had lived



during the time period because he realized that after they passed, valuable first-hand accounts would be lost. Six months after interviewing one subject, she died, which further underscored the importance of rapidly producing the history. In the end, the collection of letters, interviews, autobiographical narratives, and other materials comprised Bancroft's seven-volume *History of California*, published between 1884-1890.

The seventy-eight collected interviews include thirteen with women. They shared the experience of living in California before, during, and after the US-Mexico War. Most of the women came from privileged, land-owning families. However, at least one of the women (Isidora Filomena) was Native American; others worked for missions; and others were perhaps servants in the upper-class women's houses. Cerruti, Savage, and Gómez recorded many of the women's testimonios as an afterthought. Privileging the male-controlled text, Bancroft wanted papers from missions, old family estates, and government buildings; lacking these, he instructed his researchers to interview Mexican American men. The women were a last resort, and their testimonios factor only as footnotes in Bancroft's history. Thus, most of the recent scholarship on the testimonios collected for Bancroft's project focuses on Californio men, especially Mariano Vallejo's 1875 memoir *Recuerdos Historicos y Personales Tocante á la Alta California*. While this autobiographical document is the most thoroughly extensive of the testimonios, it presents only the perspective of a wealthy, land-owning man, even though the majority of the women interviewed were also well connected to the Californio haciendas (the aforementioned Rosalía Vallejo, for instance, was Mariano's sister). Yet the presence of some of the women, such as Dorotea Valdez, giving voice to different class positions makes the testimonios, when read as a collection, a much richer, more diverse articulation

of experiences within and across California's nineteenth-century Mexican American history.

I am interested in how these women's testimonios provide a counter history to Bancroft's that engages genre, gender, and language in ways that can be understood as an articulation of a double-voiced discourse on domestic violence. For instance, when Vallejo refers to violence surrounding her household, she's not simply referring to the threats of rape and intimate violence from the invading American army, but also the state sanctioned violence from Mexican and US military personnel and Anglo legal authorities. While calling Frémont a coward, for example, she notes that she had been coerced into collusion with him. She says, "I also wanted to spare the Californio women from more trouble, so I wrote that ominous letter which forced Captain Padilla to retrace his steps" (29). Frémont had threatened to burn down houses with people in them and the life of her unborn child; she took his threats seriously, calculating her political position to eke what she could from the situation. In this case, she lies to Padilla, knowing he (and the rest of the Mexican army) cannot save them, but she does this in order to protect other women. Her balancing act works on two levels of domestic—she is protecting their homes and bodies as well as their national identity of Spanish/Mexican Californios.

This chapter takes a looser definition of "domestic violence" than later chapters, as I define it as any kind of familial violence that then extends to the other ways women in Alta California experienced violence from the military, the state, the church, or the interviewers themselves. Because these testimonios occur before our modern conceptions of domestic violence, it is important to read the subtext of what the women are saying. Realizing that they sometimes speak allegorically, that they mask violence against their

bodies with Victorian euphemisms, and that they are reluctant to be overly critical of their own families and society, is essential to understanding the subtext. Furthermore, strictures against “wife-beating” had only begun to appear in the national laws, so other types of domestic violence still lacked descriptive words. I am reminded of words frequently credited to Gloria Steinem in the 1970s, “In those days when a woman was beaten up, we didn’t call it battered. We just called it life” (qtd. in Alley and Brown 25). Lack of a legal definition at the time gives leeway for more extended analysis of what actions could constitute domestic violence, especially with regard to a cultural and historical moment that coded deviance from social norms as “bad behavior.” Wald’s comments about disruptions are applicable in this instance as the revealing words women use to describe instances of violation tell an alternative history to the one Bancroft is collecting. Without the specific words we use to describe domestic violence, women in Alta California experienced myriad forms of domestic violence and attempted to describe the affects to their interviewers.

I offer an analysis of the testimonios, then, as Chicana feminist texts that respond to cultural violence. Rosaura Sánchez’s work on the testimonios provides a framework for understanding how the texts are “discourses of the subaltern, the Californios, who, acutely aware of their displacement, feel compelled to speak, to engage in cultural struggle, not as an end in itself, but as a strategy toward positioning themselves collectively” (xiii). Resistance to Anglo state domination and assertion of women’s independent agency in California is evident in the text of the testimonios; also interesting is the way the women challenge the Mexican state and the romanticizing of pre-1848 California gender roles and familial responsibilities. In her articulation of the past, each

woman emphasizes her contributions to the society she inhabited before American invasion and stakes a claim to a valued and influential place in the Anglo American California. In these testimonios, it is possible to find women's voices as well as their agency. One of the primary strategies they use is double-voiced discourse that allows them to reveal—through subtext and allegory—what they cannot overtly say. I will show how these women use their agency in ways that challenge patriarchal, heteronormative, hierarchical Anglo and Mexican American society. Their resistance to colonization (externally and in their communities) through sexual violence makes their interviews nascent Chicana feminist projects.

The women bravely took on social problems by discussing domestic and sexual violence in their testimonios. In a much earlier incident in California (1785), Eulalia Callis, with disregard for her husband and the church's will, accused her husband of immoral behavior (sexually assaulting an indigenous girl). As Bárbara Reyes describes, "Her levying these charges against her husband was seen as potentially more dangerous and injurious than the behavior itself, as she was challenging the patriarchal hierarchy and the colonists' honor and defying the missionaries' attempts to silence her" (104). The testimonios are collected nearly one hundred years later, but the violence and strictures against women's voices had not changed much. Reyes continues, "Callis' public voice not only attacked her husband but also undermined the very foundation of colonial institutions, which required the Spanish male to serve as head of household and the woman to be submissive and reject the idea of divorce" (104). Add to women's concerns the US invasion of 1848, and subsequent American legal systems and land dispossession, and the women of Alta California had much to contest, but only a few ways to say it. The

narratives, then, must be read with careful attention to the details the women provide but also conceal. A central concern for the women is resistance to sexual violence, publically from the state and church and privately within the family. Using this term broadly to address actions from rape and attempted rape to forced marriages and sexualization of their bodies, I show how the women's experiences necessitate responses to the Mexican government, mission priests, American army, and the interviewers themselves.

Resistance to cultural violence (state, church, and family) reveals that the concerns for these women are not much different from those of Chicanas whose writing I examine in the fifth chapter.

I begin my analysis by situating the testimonios as Chicana/o projects and briefly examining their archival recovery. I then turn my focus to a close reading of the testimonios to illustrate women's multiple and varied responses to cultural violence. Since I read the texts as implicitly nascent Chicana projects, other aspects of the women's identities are also important to uncover. The process of shifting from the colonizer to the colonized disrupts these texts and leads to an analysis of them as part of Emma Pérez's decolonial imaginary; as the "time lag between the colonial and postcolonial, that intersitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated" the decolonial imaginary is an apt description for how the women discuss their identities and pasts (6). The women are simultaneously critical of the American colonization and the Mexican government; through their criticism they delineate the ways that these states have imposed cultural violence on their bodies. They also see themselves as colonial and colonized subjects, which has made them into an oppressed colonial other. Pérez explains that because this positioning is not "simply oppressed or victimized" but both, it

creates a liminal identity that means “one negotiates within the imaginary to a decolonizing otherness where all identities are at work in one way or another” (7). The women deconstruct their own positions as privileged women and oppressed gendered subjects in both the Mexican and American social orders. The women seek recognition and continuation of their agency regardless of their place in the class and racial hierarchy.

The tendency to read the women as simply waxing nostalgic about their past is to read the testimonios as only declarations against American colonization. Padilla points out, “nostalgia mixed with anger functioned to mediate the manifold social forces that infringed upon the spirit of those people who resided in the vast territory that became the western United States in 1848” (11). This use of anger is complex in its ability to criticize institutions within the Mexican American community as well as the colonizer. Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana Rivero agree that anger and nostalgia mix in the testimonios to offer critiques on the state:

The voices that come to us from these California narratives not only cement the place of women and their activities in the population of the new frontier but also show us their ingenuity and survival skills. And although the voices are sometimes accommodating to the new order after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, they are also the voices of resistance, anger, and loss. (13)

I argue that the women rarely invoke nostalgia; even as the women criticize the barbarity of the new regime, more importantly they critique the pastoral reminiscences of Mexican American men who seek to relegate women’s production in California life to domestic affairs. The women’s accounts of experiences with government and management of the land or missions reinforce this argument. For the men, consenting to interviews was a

way of contesting the violence of the American colonization and the process of becoming racialized Others. For the women, these interviews offered an opportunity to counter violence they experienced as classed, raced, and gendered Others. The men's testimonios have often been read as nationalist impulses against Anglo America; the women's testimonios should be read as simultaneous critiques on patriarchy in Mexican and Anglo social mores.

The testimonios' textual history illustrates how marginalized women's voices were, especially when they criticized patriarchal privilege. Their agency must be read in between the lines of their testimonies, as Bancroft's project is a masculinist narrative. Bancroft's employees recorded the testimonios and returned these texts to Bancroft and the men writing the history with him. Bancroft and his writers produced serialized volumes and sold subscriptions. The history was popular and widely read on the East Coast. Unfortunately, most of the sections about women drew not from the women's testimonios, but from the men's. Women's testimonios were sometimes listed in the footnotes of the history. Even though women in Alta California had many rights American women wanted, Bancroft's history focused on men as the history-makers and largely ignored women's contributions to Mexican Californian society.<sup>2</sup> The women's testimonios factored very minimally in Bancroft's seven volume *History of California*. The material went into the archives along with church documents, family papers, and other material Bancroft culled from to create the history.

The Bancroft project offered the possibility that Mexican Americans could maintain a position in the changing political and economic landscape of nineteenth century California. As Tomás Almaguer points out, the emerging definition of non-white

identities in California established a “eurocentric cultural criteria to hierarchically evaluate and racialize the various cultural groups” despite the initial ability of the Californio elite to “attenuate more virulent expressions of anti-Mexican sentiment” and “challenge Anglo-domination for a time” (8). These testimonios can be read as challenges to Anglo-domination and insurances against erasure. Indeed, Padilla underscores the importance of looking forward to the recovery of testimonios by revealing that Felipe Fierro, editor of a Spanish-language San Francisco newspaper, encouraged his readers to “participate in the Bancroft project, not for Bancroft’s benefit but in anticipation of the day their stories would be given a public life of their own” (26-27). Fierro recognized that Bancroft’s *History* would be powerful in constructing the rhetoric of California ownership. Furthermore, these narratives would be preserved as part of their connection to that project, enabling a voice to challenge erasure at the same time that land displacement was occurring more rapidly. The historical urgency Bancroft exhibited to get the testimonios before the givers passed away is mirrored by the efforts on the part of the interviewees to retain vestiges of the lives and contributions to the Mexican and American societies.

The women’s participation in the project had been mostly erased until recently when scholars turned their attention to the women’s testimonios. Recovery work on these testimonios has led to renewed interest. Recent new Spanish transcriptions have also been published of the women’s texts in *Crítica* by Rosaura Sánchez, Beatrice Pita, and Bárbara Reyes. Their work resulted in an influential availability of the archival presence of these texts. In the “Preface” to *Telling Identities*, Sánchez remarks on the inaccessibility of these testimonios to “explain why these texts have not before received the attention that



they merit” (xi). A new English translation by Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz makes the testimonios even more accessible. Until this century much of the testimonio material, men’s and women’s, had not been published. Furthermore, past English translations have left out sentences or paragraphs of the women’s words, substantially altering their meaning; instead of showing that Angustias de la Guerra opposed the American invasion, a 1956 translation suggested that she supported it. While Beebe and Senkewicz acknowledge the inevitability of their own filtering of the translations, they have “attempted to rectify those omissions” through their project (xxxix).<sup>3</sup> Now that there are versions of the texts more readily available, it is time to examine them as projects capable of articulating a place for Mexican American women in the complex social and political construction of nineteenth-century California.

Each of the women negotiates an arrangement with her interviewer to tell her own history in the context of California history. The women’s testimonios were largely afterthoughts, often collected only when the researcher had some extra time while waiting for a mission to locate papers or when the man of the house, whose testimonio they sought, was unavailable. As Genero Padilla explains: “women’s narratives were considered merely supplemental to men’s” (111). The women claim different identities—Spanish, Mexican, Indian, Californian—as a way of politically subverting the stereotypes that popular histories reinforced. Antonia Castañeda describes how racial categories affected women:

In accounts of Mexican California (1822-1846), the popular historians [including Bancroft] divide women into two classes: “Spanish” and “Mexican.” Although the vast majority of Californians, including the elite, were *mestizo* or *mulatto* and

Mexican, not Spanish, in nationality, women from long-time Californian elite, land-owning families, some of whom married Europeans or Euro-Americans, were called “Spanish.” Women from more recently arrived or non-elite families were called “Mexican.” “Spanish” women were morally, sexually, and racially pure; “Mexican” women were immoral and sexually and racially impure.

(“Gender” 9)

This subjugation of ethnic identity and women’s positions by popular historians is evident in the women’s testimonios. For example, Eulalia Pérez told Thomas Savage that her parents were “both white people through and through,” but she took care of a mission in a role that did not indicate that her family had been among the elite Californios (99). The ability to claim these nuanced identities shows that these racialized stereotypes could damage a woman’s reputation and public perception of her. The ability to name oneself against racist and sexist hierarchies is a privilege Chicanas continue to fight for. The early California women give voice to the power that naming implies. Giving these testimonios allowed Mexican American women to perform and assert their identities against Anglo American erasure of their past and Mexican American men’s erasure of their contributions. In this way, the testimonios can be read as containing strategies women use to resist cultural violence; that is, violence constructed and imposed on women by the state and the church and the ways state and church (cultural) violence support intimate or familial violence.

Many testimonios begin with the woman describing her family and her husband’s or father’s connections to the Mexican government. However, they quickly morph into a story of women’s experiences in general or the interviewee’s moment of heroism. Emma

Pérez has suggested, “That which is real for someone is the imaginary for another, especially if the wish is to rectify that reality decades later” (xv). Each of these women, seeing her power as a woman diminish under Anglo gender roles and laws, had a vested stake in asserting women’s agency in California. Therefore, she sought to rectify the reality of the past through her testimonio. There is a double movement to combat the passive señorita image as well as to show that women with agency use it appropriately, even if in some ways, they still exert their influence in service of the patriarchy. In this way, women describe how they resist domestic violence from the state—a state that would do violence against the people it is supposed to protect. María Inocenta Pico tells about her husband’s disagreement over money with General Micheltoinea. The general orders her husband’s execution, but she refuses to accept this fate for him. She tells Savage how she headed off the execution:

I then quickly had a wide variety of provisions put together for the general and his officers. These included chickens, mutton, cakes, cheese enchiladas, good wine, whiskey, and more...The general wrote me a letter and sent it back to me with the same man who had transported the provisions. He told me not to fear for my husband...He set my husband free at Santa Inés and returned all the horses they had taken from us. (303)

She uses her own agency and education to save her husband from unfounded accusations. When he is arrested a second time, she again saves him despite having given birth fifteen days earlier. However, her actions serve patriarchal interests. She cannot act to advance her own social position exactly; instead, she participates in a political space that is still defined by men’s actions. However, throughout her narrative, she emphasizes how

because of her actions and quick wit, she is able to triumph. Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero call this moment in the testimonio a place where, “an exasperation, a value judgment, a triumphal moment, or an outrage reaches through the translations” (12). These moments are places where the double-voiced discourse become clear. The contrast between public space and domestic space evident here, especially with regard to childbirth, serves to illustrate what Reyes means when she asserts “Although colonial- and Mexican-period women in New Spain’s northern frontier had legal rights to property and often engaged in business, laboring women still often found their work perceived as, and relegated to, the domestic sphere” (127). Even though Pico exercises her rights as a citizen, she describes her own work in domestic terms—bringing domestic exchange to the state apparatus. State violence threatens her home, and by convincing the governor to release her husband, she restores civil and domestic order.

During another revolt, Pico provided provisions for soldiers. She tells another story of women’s involvement in politics, “When we received the news in Monterey that Santa Bárbara had pronounced in favor of the revolt, we, the women who supported the cause, went as a group to the *castillo*. There we made preparations to celebrate the event and appointed Plácida our commander” (310). The women appoint another woman to orchestrate a celebration. In this event, the women do claim space outside of the patriarchy for themselves. They are celebrating military events, but the festival they create is a feminist space with a female governing body. They as a group are visible and active in public space. Pico makes this point repeatedly. Every time Savage asks her about a revolt or military action, she shows how women were instrumental in the event. Pico’s testimonio shows that she adheres to a cultural demand that she supports her

family through food. However, this also describes how she subverts domesticity by making it a political act as well as a narrative act of resistance. She does not allow Savage to control her speech or lead her in directions that reinforce patriarchal structures. Instead she claims speech for herself and all the women who have joined her in her political resistance.

The insistence on making women and women's experiences a part of the conversation in the history of Mexican California does what Deena González describes as essential to Chicana history; "that traditional borderlands histories weave archival material with personal memoir, reflection, or family stories wherever appropriate" ("Gender" 18). By giving their own histories interwoven with the narrative of California history these women are participating in a Chicana feminist project of resisting domestic violence, but since their home lives are not separate from the affects of church and state, then their experiences stretch the sphere of domestic violence to encompass violence they experience as marginalized—whether because of their class, race, or gender—citizens. Ana Castillo discusses how resistance to colonial dominance is essential for civic participation: "As human beings denigrated by the Spanish Conquest and later made invisible and further commodified by North American Anglo dominance, the majority of us don't feel that our own lives have ample influence to make a "political" difference" (142). Rather than retreat to an uncertain home space, the women actively engage politically to save their homes from state violence. Domestic violence activists have fought to ensure that the state does not inflict violence on the home space as it attempts to create laws and protections for women. Pico, and the other politically active women,

show how women must be involved in responses to domestic violence that they experience simultaneously within the home and nation.

Only a few of the women discuss their marriages, and those that do seem to have been dissatisfied. Domestic violence (in the modern understanding of the term) may have played a role in this dissatisfaction. However, many of the women discuss how they came to be married. These comments reveal the extent to which the state, the church, and their families desired to control women's sexuality and reproduction. While some of the women were able to choose who they married, or in Apolinaria Lorenzana's case whether to marry or not, most of the women experienced forced marriages for strategic (land or wealth-preserving) purposes. Their responses to the circumstances of these forced marriages show how these women embodied efforts to head off domestic violence before it continued from their family homes into their married homes. Sánchez remarks that "the testimonios reveal stringent patriarchal domination in Alta California... This domination is especially clear with the marriage contract, for here women become commodities to be exchanged by their fathers" (195). These marriages represent attempts to forcibly control the women's sexuality. The women's responses to the forced marriages reveal multiple strategies for not only protecting their sexuality from men but also in some cases asserting a sexuality that pleases the woman. Before 1848, Anglo men had to marry Mexican women in order to become citizens capable of owning land in California. After 1848, Mexican fathers wanted to marry their daughters to Anglos in hopes of preserving the land grants. As the women discuss the circumstances of their marriages with the men interviewing them, it is evident that they are criticizing Mexican patriarchal interests that

commodify women's bodies. They also challenge the Anglos' claim through these marriages to Mexican women and Mexican land.

Isidora Filomena, an Indian woman, describes the occasion of her first marriage to Solano, leader of the Suisun nation, to Cerruti as one coerced by kidnapping and rape. She notes, "I belonged to Solano before I married him and even before I was baptized...On a trip Solano took [to Cache Creek] to do some negotiating, he stole me. My father and many Satiyomi went after him, but they could not catch him" (11). Her kidnapping takes place during raids on her tribe conducted by Mexicans and Suisuns. This rape and subsequent forced marriage puts Filomena in a position to critique Mexican government and patriarchy prior to American invasion. As an Indian who married into an alliance with the Vallejo family, she is given protection after Solano's death. However, she is forced to marry again.<sup>4</sup> She describes her union with Solano as one in which, despite its violent origins, she participates as an equal within their society. Her discussion of her later marriage reveals a critique of American institutions and the effects of them on the Indian and Mexican population:

I have already gone downhill. I drink a lot of liquor because I do not have very much land filled with cattle. The blonde men stole everything. They left nothing for poor Isidora, who married Bill after Solano died. Bill is not a very loving man.

I did not give birth again. With Solano I gave birth to eight little ones. (11)

Filomena dissects the ways that she has become disempowered through the second marriage and the American invasion. As Sánchez suggests, "Escape from a patriarchal structure is not to be found in a different caste, station, or order, as seen in neophyte women who married *gente de razón*; there are only shifts from one patriarchal structure

to another” (221). Neither marriage gives Filomena explicit agency in a patriarchal system; however, the phrase “did not give birth again” suggests some sort of agency on Filomena’s part. Either Bill was infertile, or she exercised birth control, which would be a strong use of agency in the face of patriarchy.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the comment that Bill was “not a loving man” seems to conceal a more sinister possibility. He, as acting on his Anglo privilege, may have beaten or otherwise done violence to Isidora. The words for domestic violence were few and “not loving” may have been as accurate a way for her to describe the violence as she would have had. Certainly, she associates Bill with the other blonde men who have stolen her cattle, her land, and her dignity. She experiences being beaten in a national struggle for land and wealth as well as a domestic struggle within her household.

Cerruti also performs an individual form of violence on her story. In order to interview Filomena, Cerruti gave her alcohol, and took her testimony while she was under the influence. He used alcohol to misrepresent himself, to lower her defenses, and to help himself acquire her valuables. Clearly showing how land and property dispossession results in trauma and personal violation, Filomena tells Cerruti that the blonde man has stolen everything, and the implication is that Cerruti himself is complicit in this theft. He manipulates her into selling her only valuables to him for very little money and a bottle of alcohol. This treatment is a form of sexual violence, especially considering that the articles he buys from her include her wedding dress that she had planned to be buried in.<sup>6</sup> He literally undresses her without her consent. As a Native woman, Filomena receives much less respect from Cerruti than he bestows on upper class Mexican American women. His actions erase her presence at the same time he is



recording her words. His treatment of her follows Andrea Smith's analysis of perceptions of Native women that reinforce a colonialist agenda. Cerruti does not think there is anything amiss in his method (plying Filomena with alcohol and essentially stealing her possessions), and he does not see this because he views her as "conquestable." Smith describes how this phenomenon works: "Because Indian bodies are „dirty,“ they are considered sexually violable and „rapable,“ and the rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count" (10). The way Cerruti treats Filomena reinforces his gender, race, and class privilege over her in an uneven power arrangement. He feels justified taking her things because he wants to preserve them; this is a racist idea that Smith dissects by explaining, "Non-Natives feel justified in appropriating Native spirituality and Native identity because they do not believe existing Native communities are capable of independently preserving Native cultural practices" (123). Cerruti's appropriation of Filomena's things makes him the custodian of her words and her possessions. She tells her story, but he marginalizes her even in comparison to the other marginalized voices in the testimonios. The blonde man truly has stolen everything from Filomena, but she responds by using her voice and defending herself by describing her people's history that conceals the violence of domesticity and colonial domestication, explaining why she drinks, and providing an oppositional subaltern voice to the dominant narrative. Her discussion of domestic violence and the way it has appeared in her life, from her early marriage and her later one, to her bodily integrity with regard to giving birth and Cerruti's disrespect, to her experiences with land dispossession as a Native American experiencing Spanish and Mexican violence and later as aligned with the Vallejo family experience American violence.

Even women who claim agency for themselves in their marriages must still submit to patriarchal dictates concerning sexuality from Mexican fathers and Anglo laws. Josefa Carrillo begins her interview by naming herself. Then she explains the origin of the word California, and then she levels a strong critique of “Yankee savants” who have presumed to change the names of many places and peoples in California. She tells Cerruti that “what amazes [her] most is that all those name changes were made by people who did not have the right to baptize anyone” (78). Naming herself and her people shows a strong counter current to domestic violence through claiming agency and claiming space within the home and the nation. As Mary Pat Brady shows, creating space is vitally important to asserting a Chicana identity:

Chicanas write with a sense of urgency about the power of space, about its (in)clement capacity to direct and contort opportunities, hopes, lives. They write also with a sense of urgency about the need to contest such power, to counter it with alternative spatial configurations, ontologies, and genealogies. (9)

Carrillo makes this space by contesting naming power and countering it with the already existing alternatives. In her marriage, she also creates the capacity to direct her own life, even if she is only marginally successful. She is one of two or three women who makes her own choice in marriage. She notes that Henry Fitch asked her to marry him before he talked with her parents. They approved, but the Mexican governor halted the ceremony, because as Carrillo supposes, “I concluded that his persecution of me and my husband was no more than an act motivated by the despair that had taken hold of his soul. He was convinced that I had shown preference for a rival whom he detested” (79). Governor Echeandía attempted to control the sexuality of the women within California. He tried to

stop the marriage of an Anglo man and a Mexican woman, but more importantly, he saw her relationship as a direct personal affront. This seems strange because marriages between Californianas and Anglos were fairly common. Castañeda remarks “In the early periods of contact, when whites sought to establish trapping, trading, and other commercial relations with Indians and Mexicans, intermarriage and consensual unions were as much economic as they were sexual or romantic alliances” (“Gender” 15). That the Governor found her marriage to be a personal affront seems to indicate that what he may have resented most was a Californiana who exerted her sexual and romantic appetite in a way that the state and church did not control. It is important to note that there is a double-edged aspect to the women’s testimonios regarding marriage. Chicana sexuality is particularly fraught with regard to relationships with those of another race. The potential to be a cultural traitor (a Malinche) looms; Norma Alarcón aptly describes this situation:

The myth [of Chicana sexuality] contains the following sexual possibilities: woman is sexually passive, and hence at all times open to potential use by men whether it be seduction or rape [...] the use of her as a pawn may be intracultural, “amongst us guys,” or intercultural, which means if we are not using her then “they” must be using her. Since woman is seen as highly pawnable, nothing she does is perceived as a choice. (205)

Carrillo’s assertion of her own sexuality allowed her to make a choice. She rejected the state and the church’s control over her sexuality, but she still desired her family’s approval. This shows that even in making a personal choice, Carrillo could still have felt ambivalent about challenging the patriarchal status quo. In other words, she is much more

comfortable resisting domestic violence from the state, but still seeks to maintain a more intimate domestic harmony within her own family.

After the couple returned from their elopement, Carrillo found that her father had not forgiven her for leaving. That she asked for her father's blessing shows clearly what Sánchez suggests: "The patriarchal structure is in no way rejected, though Josefa does make clear her prerogative to choose one patriarchy over another" (215). She did choose her husband's patriarchy, but she becomes a full participant in their union, running a store and fighting to keep her land after 1848. Her business sense is, in itself, an affront to patriarchal power structures. Reyes writes, "Although both men and women were active participants in the survival of the family [...and] despite the fact that women were involved in a variety of cottage industries, their labor was depreciated as women's work at the same time that men's work was afforded a superior value" (127). It becomes more difficult for Carrillo to retain her land in the face of Anglo law after the death of her husband. Even though they were equal partners in business, the new laws see her as inferior, economically, intellectually, and physically.

If she chooses one form of patriarchy over another in her marriage to an American businessman over a Mexican governor, she certainly does not support American institutions encroaching into California. Her discussion of place names is a strong rejection of American claims to power in California. Again this critique makes a trace for environmental critiques that Chicanas will make regarding gentrification and urban and rural development. Brady connects the concern over the environment to assertion of civil rights: "Chicanas have also been deeply attentive to the struggles for civil rights, a struggle that must be understood at least in part as a struggle over the use of space to

maintain or disrupt social, political, and financial power” (10). Imposition of Anglo law subjects Carrillo to a traumatizing loss of power, when she loses the business and her land. However, she realizes the temporality of space, and Carrillo’s choices about how that space acts upon her makes her assertion of naming rights a strong commentary on domestic violence. The Anglo presence has done tremendous violence to not only the people of California but also the land and cities through renaming them. The Californio elite suffered from the renaming, in that they became Othered by the Anglo discourse, when they had held the bulk of power prior to 1848 by supporting the mission projects to control the neophytes and being so far from the locus of power in Mexico City that they created their own institutions of power. The war, and the subsequent imposition of American law, enacts domestic violence on Mexican Americans by rendering them second-class citizens.

Religious law also compelled women to marry, even against their wishes. Women who worked at the missions were still subject to the priest’s wishes and depended on the mission for their land, money, and survival. Eulalia Pérez had been married and given birth to twelve children. When her husband died she became the *llavera* at mission San Gabriel. She recounts to Thomas Savage her duties at the mission, which included overseeing a large staff of Indian indentured servants. As Reyes discusses, the position afforded Pérez a privileged position within the mission and granted her enormous responsibility, yet because she was so invested in the mission’s goals, she was vulnerable to control by the missionaries. In some ways, Pérez both enacts domestic violence on the indigenous population and experiences domestic violence in her second marriage. Once her daughters married, Pérez faced pressure from the fathers to marry again:

I did not want to get married, but Father Sánchez told me that Mariné was a very good man, which turned out to be the case. He also had quite a bit of money, but he never handed the box where he kept it over to me. I gave in to the Father's wishes. I did not have the heart to deny Father Sánchez anything because he had been like a father and mother to me and to my entire family. (106)

Reyes shows how devastating this marriage was for Pérez's independence by describing the events of the marriage; "Pérez was also subjected to—and somewhat grudgingly submitted to—the paternalistic control of the missionaries" (128). This marriage destroys Pérez, personally and professionally. The money box story indicates that she moves from a position of relative power within the missions to a subservient position as a wife who cannot handle money. A better reading might be that Mariné enacts economic violence on Pérez by stripping her of the esteem she had held as a *llavera* at the mission. His violence against her becomes a stand in for the betrayal she has experienced at the hands of the church. But, she does not feel that she can reject the marriage because she has a familial obligation to Father Sánchez. She must repay her debt for living in the mission through this marriage. The missions, under pressure of secularization, were looking for ways to transfer land to those loyal to the missions. This plan backfired because the land did not stay in Pérez's hands. Mariné's son sold the land after his death (97). Pérez not only resented this marriage but also saw it as robbing her of the agency she had cultivated at the mission. Her inability to access the couple's finances ("he never handed the box where he kept it over to me") clearly is antithetical to her position as the "keeper of the keys" at the mission. Through this line she contests the division of economic space into masculine and feminine realms. She escapes the sexual violence of the forced marriage

by remaining at the mission; as unsatisfactory as it may be to remain with those who had commodified her, she did not have to live with Mariné, who she clearly feels did not respect her or her importance to the mission.

The argument for this marriage revealing how the church enacted domestic violence on women is further illustrated by the legal system in California. After the death of her husband, if the mission had given land to Pérez, she could have owned the land on her own. She did not need to get married in order to have legal property rights under Mexican law. However, with the Anglo invasion, the mission would be subjected to violent seizures of land regardless of who owned it, or who had sold it. The sadness she feels when the land is sold without her opinion considered simply foreshadows the massive amounts of land Californios would lose in contested land grants over the next thirty years. Indeed, as her testimonio was taken in the 1870s, Pérez would have seen that marriages made for land preservation often did not ensure that the land would remain Mexican. Squatters, old documents, and changes to farming and community grazing for livestock all conspired to reallocate land to Anglo control. So ultimately, the missionaries exposed Pérez to domestic violence for little good effect.

The role of the father in selecting husbands and restricting sexuality, then, also refers to the fathers at the missions who control sexuality of both the Indians who live at the missions in addition to the Mexican American women who work at the missions. Apolinaria Lorenzana describes how the missions attempted to control sexuality of the neophytes in the missions:

The single women were under the care of an older Indian woman who was like the matron. This woman kept a close watch over them. She would go with the

young women when they bathed and never took her eyes off them. In the evening after dinner, she would lock the young women up in the *monjerío* and take the key to the Father. (173)

Literally and figuratively the Father controls the young women's sexuality. And just in case the women do not understand the effects of unsanctioned sexual activity, they have examples of "fallen women" to guide them on the right path. The fallen women have been raped by land owners, missionaries, or soldiers and have contracted venereal disease or become pregnant. Yet, despite her moralizing, Lorenzana, in many ways is a woman-identified woman. As an orphan brought to California, she experienced trauma when the woman who had accompanied her, who she called mother, left California with her husband. Lorenzana speculates that her "mother" died "from a broken heart because she had to leave me behind" (170). She also makes a point to say that she was "always involved in caring for the sick women" (172). She remarks that she has innumerable godchildren and says of them, "Since I had no daughters of my own, I took care of everybody's daughters" (192). It is important to note here that she is ultimately identified with women and daughters, even though she has cared for many children.<sup>7</sup> Her statements reinforce *comadre* connections and disrupt the heteronormative system. Her commitment to the mission led the Fathers to grant her three ranchos, in part to protect the mission land, but notably, they did not require that she get married. A man had asked to marry her, but she states, "I was not drawn to the state of matrimony, even though I was aware of the importance of such a sacred institution" (191). Yet, she is not a nun either. This remark shows that although Lorenzana occupies a lower class position than Josefa Carrillo, she still retains some agency and control over her sexuality. While she



did not have to marry, one wonders whether she could have asserted her sexuality had she chosen to. She does not have to adhere to a heteronormative view of wealth and perpetuation of wealth. However, her unmarried, landed position does not protect her from the land grant appropriation committed by Americans. Her land too is taken under Anglo law.

Land and money led the upper class to marry off their daughters, but the middle and lower classes also rigidly controlled young women's sexuality. Young girls were also forced to marry before they completed their educations. María Inocenta Pico recognized that education was essential for women to exercise agency and she deplored the social customs that controlled young women based on their biology:

Many girls did not complete even those basic subjects because their mothers would take them out of school, almost always to marry them off. This bad custom existed of marrying off very young girls whenever men asked for their hand. I was in school only until the age of fourteen, which is when my mother took me to the rancho to show me how to work. I got married when I was fifteen years and eight months old. (312)

Pico places the blame for girls' lack of education on their mothers, which is interesting in that it explores yet another form of domestic violence—the family's denial of the girls' educations.<sup>8</sup> What Pico is saying is that the process of "marrying off" young girls makes them commodities for their families and undermines female agency. While Pico married a Mexican man, she no doubt saw many of her friends married to Anglo men who they had not chosen to marry. None of these marriages guaranteed that the women would be able to retain their land in the face of American invasion.

These marriages and in some cases the notable absence of marriage reflect the concern Gloria Anzaldúa shows regarding rigidly prescribed roles for women: “For a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother. Today some of us have a fourth choice: entering the world by way of education and career and becoming self-autonomous persons” (39). Pico recognizes that the lack of education ultimately limits the girls’ opportunities for becoming self-autonomous persons. Forging a fourth way is more like forging multiple ways of being. Carrillo and Lorenzana found agency within and against the church and the state as these institutions attempt to control their sexuality. Significantly, they accomplished their resistance in different ways showing that there are many ways to resist the rigid gender roles enforced on women.

Reflecting on the ways that patriarchal frontier histories disregard women, especially women of color, Castañeda notes that: “Because racial inferiority was equated with sexual impurity—even prostitution—nonwhite women could be raped with impunity, just as they could be enslaved, killed, or worked to death like beasts of burden” (“Gender” 15). Rape in the West was a tool of social control, a way for men to control women through seemingly unrelated incidences of sexual violence. However, when examined in context, these individual events show that the threat of violence was pervasive and formed another way that the state exerted power over women’s lives. Rapes can also be seen as a way that national violence manifests as intimate violence. Current scholars focus on the role of rape in war, pointing out how in the former Yugoslavia rapes against Bosnian women are

a powerful example of how women’s bodies are marked by nationalism. By this

we mean that rather than consider „the nation“ as derived from a primordially determined collectivity, we [...] argue that this sense of belonging and delineation of borders between „us“ and „them“ is a cultural construction. Within this construction, women often symbolically and materially reproduce the nation. (Adelman, Cavender, and Jurik 182)

Rape, then, becomes a way for women to allegorically discuss the ways bodies are marked by nationalism and the ways that those rapes continue to be reproduced in the nation. This is especially significant with regard to rapes by soldiers. As Cynthia Enloe asserts, with regard to the Rwandan rapes but applicable in this context too, “Reporting particular sorts of violence is as much a gendered process as war waging itself. If the laws of society [...] make women second-class citizens in realms such as marriage and the ownership of land, then it is all the more dangerous for a woman to risk her respectability and family support by telling of her experiences of sexual assault” (133). This comment is particularly appropriate to the ways the Californianas discuss rape and sexual assault, because Enloe draws out how loss of legal power makes women vulnerable. After 1848, women’s legal rights were the subject of the new Anglo power structures. Most of the women had lived under conditions of war for much of their lives—war with Indians, with Mexicans, and with Americans—so the narratives provided by the women Cerruti, Savage, and Gómez interviewed reveal ways that women responded to this atrocity of rape within the context of war.

Almost all of the women interviewed share a story about rape or the impending threat of rape at the hands of Mexican, American, or Indian men. Women use these stories to illustrate power dynamics in California both before and after 1848.

Complicating the narrative of sexual violence at the hands of the colonizers, three of the women describe an event in which two young girls were abducted by a revolt orchestrated by Indians. Their testimonios of this event gives a glimpse as to how multifaceted race, class, and gender relations were in California even before American colonization. The women use the threat of rape from Mexican men to challenge patriarchal norms of Alta California. Just as Chicana feminists challenge machismo and sexual violence, these women level strong critiques of state sanctioned violence against women. The testimonios contest representations of women as sexually vulnerable. Resisting this characterization serves to reinforce Alarcón's analysis that "As long as we continue to be seen in that way [open to sexual exploitation] we are earmarked to be abusable matter, not just by men of another culture, but all cultures including the one that breeds us" (205). The women use stories of how they thwart the threat of rape at the hands of American soldiers to show how their resistance has been successful. Finally, stories of rape and abduction by Indians serve as historical allegory to level a critique of American invasion that they cannot express directly to their interviewers.

Life on the haciendas before 1848 was not pastoral and ideal. Apolinaria Lorenzana shows how the women she nursed found themselves at the mercy of men. She condemns this abuse of women implicitly. She could delegate responsibility for caring for all the other sick people, but she knew she had to help care for the women who had been victims of male violence:

In addition to common illnesses such as headaches and mild fevers, the Indian women suffered from syphilis and sores. The married women who lived at the *rancherías* and would leave the *rancherías* to go to work would get these

diseases. This happened despite the many efforts of the Fathers and the *mayordomos* to keep the women from engaging in bad behavior or from dealing with people from outside the mission. (172)

The people outside the mission were Mexican ranchers who hired the Californio women or used the Indian women as slave labor. The women in these positions, who depended on their jobs for a livelihood, were at the mercy of the Fathers, *mayordomos*, or ranch owners who could and did rape the women with impunity. Lorenzana is criticizing the Mexican presence that subjects women to patriarchal control and European venereal diseases. Women pay the price of public and religious shaming for these diseases—no matter if men infect them through rape or consensual intercourse. If the women choose sexual partners outside the mission as attempts to gain power through sexuality, this action too backfires as they find themselves still subjected to a patriarchal order that punishes women for sexuality. Additional implications appear when considering that Lorenzana views control over sexuality as something that women must protect, but not as something women can assert. The church and the economic system deny women attempts to gain control over sexuality, which is necessary for self-autonomous persons. The women held in the mission have no recourse to address rape nor do they have the social capital to assert their sexual desire. Lorenzana shows how rape affects women and leads to a culture of blaming women for “bad behavior” that somehow justifies locking single women in their rooms. She is unequivocally condemning sexual violence committed by Mexicans against Mexican and Indian women.

The tumultuous revolts in California prior to 1848 mark political upheaval in which women had taken part, as I showed earlier. However, these also mark the inability

of the Mexican government to create a stable social space that values women and their contributions. The disruptions of daily life and the sexual violence women face as a result are central to some of the testimonios. Juana Machado explains that during one revolt,

Micheltorena brought with him a large retinue of officers and an infantry battalion that our people called *cholos*...It was made up of thieves and criminals taken from the prisons in Mexico as well as prisoners from Chapala...We were so afraid of them that we hid everything. There were some good men among them and the officers behaved well. (139)

Machado accomplishes two things with this seemingly contradictory passage. She articulates the fear women had of the Mexican troops through her implied analysis that they will take whatever property strikes their fancy, including women. However, she also acquiesces to the need to cast Mexican Americans in a good light for the Bancroft project. She attempts to defend and condemn at the same time. A deeply layered, ambivalent discussion of Mexican Americans, her analysis shows a class bias toward the officers and a critique of the government's choices in troops that threaten the stability of the landed California regime. The possibility of rape by the lower, prisoner class is a real fear that she exposes later in the testimonio. Machado says that in San Diego, "We heard little about the governor's actions, but there was no shortage of rumors about his troops' bad behavior" (140). The bad behavior could have suggested many things, but in this Victorian context, it likely describes sexual violence or misconduct, as it certainly does when Lorenzana uses it to refer to the women in the missions. The disruptions in Californian society through rape and the threat of rape by the Mexican soldiers precede the more graphic discussions of rape by American troops. Castañeda notes: "Bancroft

treats sexual and other violence against native women primarily in relation to the bitter conflict between the institutions of church and state, and attributes it to the moral degeneration of the racially mixed soldier-settler population” (9). The women’s testimonios refute Bancroft’s position, and by not including the women’s stories in his *History of California*, Bancroft acted in keeping with historical practices of the time. Emma Pérez uncovers the stereotypes masculine histories engender, especially as she comments, “historians have participated in a politics of historical writing in which erasure—the erasure of race, gender, sexualities, and especially differences—was not intentional, but rather a symptom of the type of narrative emplotment unconsciously chosen by historians” (27).

The women show that rape and the threat of rape represented by the American soldiers is another dangerous extension of Anglo power. Rosalía Vallejo, who was particularly querulous with Cerruti during her interview, may have sensed his resistance to represent her counter narrative of John Frémont’s actions during the Bear Flag revolt. She says, “Many paid writers have characterized Frémont with a great number of endearing epithets, but he was a tremendous coward. Listen to me! I have good reason to say this” (28). It seems that she had to get Cerruti’s attention and proceeded to tell the story of the soldiers’ atrocities in detail:

The women did not dare go out for a walk unless they were escorted by their husband or their brothers. One of my servants was a young Indian girl who was about seventeen years old. I swear that John C. Frémont ordered me to send that girl to the officers’ barracks many times. However, by resorting to tricks, I was

able to save that poor girl from falling into the hands of that lawless band of thugs who had imprisoned my husband. (29)

Direct intimidation of women in the town is accomplished by threats of sexual violence. Vallejo's comment that she had to "resort to tricks" to keep the women of her household safe indicates an unwillingness to share with Cerruti exactly what she did.<sup>9</sup> The "tricks" indicate not only agency on her part but also a willingness to be deceptive, cleverness, and agility. Above all, the tricks (or artifices or wits) she refers to show that the women of her household respond to this threat from American patriarchy by creating bonds with each other to protect themselves from violence. The tricks may have included using women's stereotypical "weaknesses" to their advantage; for instance, the young girl might have been "indisposed"—playing on the fear of menstruation—or Vallejo may have "forgotten" to send her—using the inconstancy of women's minds as an excuse. Other tricks may have included disguising the girl or temporarily assigning another person in the house to her responsibilities. In order to circumvent the violence, women had to work together to create plausible stories.

Vallejo took over as head of the household while her husband in jail. In this way, she assumes responsibility for protecting the virtue of the women within the house. Her domestic environment becomes the site of a political struggle, and she uses the tools available to her in order to conduct a political act of resistance. She will not cede her domestic space to the threat of the violation by the invaders. She tricks the invading military as well as legal systems that would strip her of her power. Vallejo works within the system in which she lives. Her analysis refocuses on the women's roles in domestic resistance. Castañeda's discussion of borderlands historians as giving "descriptions of



rapacious attacks on Amerindian women by soldiers focus not on the women but on the conflict over authority that these attacks exacerbated between officials of church and state” (“Gender” 14). Vallejo’s description offers an alternative way of reading this history. She focuses squarely on women’s perceptions of events and the ways women worked together to resist violence from outside their communities. The way that Vallejo attempts to protect the other women in her household foreshadows the conflict between First and Third World feminists that appears in relationships between Chicanas and Mexican women.<sup>10</sup> Working with other women and men in the Californio community to prevent violence provides an alternative history to popular historiographies of the time period and, at the same time, resists military and intimate violence.

The responses to threats of rape show that the Californianas developed strategies of resistance that they narrate for their interviewers. These acts allow them to change the focus of the interview and subvert the system that dictates their position as vulnerable subjects. This gives a trace of the Chicana goal articulated by Beatriz Pesquera and Denise Segura that: “The American Women’s Movement should be less dedicated to finding ways to integrate women into a male-dominated world and more devoted to developing strategies to end structures of inequality and exploitation produced by American capitalism” (524). The California women’s commitment to working with the tools available to them to resist cultural violence reflects a strong critique of the Anglo state and economic system that threatened women on the ranchos and the missions. Because sexual violence disproportionately affected (and continues to affect) women, examining the ways that women enact resistance across race and class lines is important

to understanding the double voiced narrative. Violence is not an individual problem but a social problem that communities must work together to confront.

In their narratives of how rape and threats of rape pervade their lived experiences, it is necessary to examine a story three separate women tell, describing Indians' abduction and rape of two young Mexican girls. Thinking of this story as a historical allegory enables a reading that transforms the story from one depicting abduction and rape by Indians to one that represents American conquest as abduction and rape of Mexican Americans and their land. The women's interviewers had already shown reluctance to cast American invasion in a negative light.<sup>11</sup> The women tell this story about the past in order to comment on their present position. Each woman reflects on the story slightly differently, showing how the use of the allegory directly relates to the concerns faced by the particular woman. As Jameson suggests, this seemingly personal moment connects to the national allegory by commenting on the dispossession of Mexican Americans in general and women in particular. A central anxiety present in the discussion of the story is the anxiety of intermarriage. The women use the fear of abduction by Indians as a way of expressing the distress at the intermarriages between Californios and Anglos that benefited Anglos much more than Californios.

Juana Machado's second marriage was to an Anglo man and each of her four daughters also married Anglos. Her narrative of the Indian abduction uses language reminiscent of the American conquest:

Before leaving, they ransacked the rancho and took all the horses, cattle, and other items of value. They then burned down the buildings...All the efforts to recover

the lost property, and the even greater efforts to rescue the kidnapped girls, were futile. To this day, nobody knows the fate of those poor children. (130)

The feeling of helplessness and resentment is similar to the way Rosalía Vallejo, Dorotea Valdez, and María Antonia Rodríguez describe the behavior of Frémont's troops. More chillingly, it is very similar to the graphic description provided by Catarina Ávila of a massacre at Mission San Miguel. A band of former US military troops killed the family, children, and servants who were staying at the mission. According to Ávila's testimonio they rounded up the horses, and "Then they gathered up all the money and jewels that belonged to the family. They had so much gall. They actually rifled through the family's clothing and picked out the specific clothes they liked" (91). The intimacy of clothing suggests that their bodies have also been violated by the invasion. Lázaro Lima observes that her testimonio is particularly significant because of what it leaves out and remarks that while the Bancroft historians had been sent to get her husband's papers, she tells them that the papers no longer exist, and instead regales them with the story of the massacre. In reading Ávila's testimonio, Lázaro Lima comments, "she does possess endangered knowledge about California living in the mid-1800s and the violence brought on by westward expansion, replete with dates, names, and dead bodies that she will not forget" (44). The similarity of this story to the one Machado tells is significant to the place of historical allegory. American conquest is dangerous because a seemingly benign presence suddenly becomes rapacious and menacing. The danger of associating with the conquerors is implicit in the allegory. Furthermore, the final comments Lima offers bolster a reading of the testimonios as double-voiced discourse addressing domestic violence: Her "willingness to offer her memories of this cultural clash might have been

motivated not only by the violence wrought on the Mexican body that she wanted to memorialize but also by the violence enacted by laws that diminished Mexican and Mexican American access to some of the most basic rights of citizenship” (44-45).

Felipa Osuna tells the story in light of her own revelation that she had foiled a plot the Diegueño Indians had planned to abduct her and Josefa Carrillo. She expresses conflicting emotions about the outcome of her role in the plot because the Indians involved had been executed:

When I saw how much the Indians suffered, it caused me great sorrow knowing that I had informed against them. It distressed me greatly...However, I must confess that the punishment produced a very beneficial effect, because after that, there were no more robberies by Indians in San Diego. Before that, we were on constant alert because there were always rumors that the Indians were coming to attack us...They took two young girls with them, Tomasa and Ramona, and nothing has ever been learned about their fate...I do not remember when those events happened. (162)

It seems that she needs to simultaneously justify and repent her choice to reveal the Indians’ plan. She cites the abduction of the two girls as evidence for why she should have told. Her conflicting feelings mirror her complicity with the American soldiers during the war in California. According to Beebe and Senkewicz, “She and her husband were accused by some of being on the side of the invaders” (148). Consciously aware of the danger and shame in being branded a cultural traitor, Osuna resented the perception that she would abandon her community, even if she was angry with individual members. She tells Savage that she had hidden a Mexican man from the American troops, but she

lets him know too that she was angry that the Californios had eaten all of her cattle when the Americans came, leaving her with nothing. Either side in the conflict could leave women destitute. Osuna acted against and was acted upon by both Americans and Californios. Her discussion of the Indian abduction shows how these interacting positions trouble her interpretation of her own actions and motivations.

Another use of the historical allegory in telling this story is the way it shows the emergent sense of the inevitability of Anglo domination in the post-1848 California. Apolinaria Lorenzana continues the story where the other women leave off. The initial attempt to rescue the girls fails because the rescue party can see them but cannot reach them. They give up and assume that the girls have been sold. However, later Lorenzana encounters a man who claims to have seen the younger girl on one of his travels. She recounts the story to Savage:

He asked her who she was. She said she was from San Diego and had been abducted by the Indians. In the end, she told him about the tragedy and begged him to take her with him, but he did not dare do that because he only had one horse. That horse was already quite tired, and if he took the girl with him, the horse would tire even more and the Indians would be able to catch up with them and kill them both. I do not know if anything else was done to rescue those girls from the clutches of the Indians. (189)

Her commentary offers similarities to the ways other women talk about the loss of land. The historical allegory represents a kind of domestic violence that the women struggle to come to terms with. The unfairness of the abduction grates at their memories and makes them feel helpless with regard to the kind of violence it produces.

Land dispossession is a form of sexual violence committed against the women who gave testimonios. While Mexican American men did lose their land, the dispossession was particularly devastating for women, many of whom married Anglo men to protect their family's land holdings. As they describe their dispossession, it is inherently linked with the disempowerment they experience as gendered subjects of American laws and social mores. As Andrea Smith explains regarding colonization, "there is a connection between patriarchy's disregard for nature, women, and indigenous peoples" (55). Indeed as Californian land became more desirable, it was important to justify Manifest Destiny by finding reasons to shift the land from the control of women and Mexican Americans to Anglo men. Castañeda makes the connection between land dispossession and the loss of civil rights:

The California gold rush, Anglo squatters, the California Land Law of 1851, racial-ethnic violence, a new language, exorbitant legal fees, lengthy court cases, second-class citizenship of Mexican Americans, and the drought of the 1860s served as the backdrop to this development, decimating the northern ranchos and dispossessing the elite Californiana/o landowners...Dispossession, the denial of civil and human rights, and the ensuing political and social subjugation gave rise to the coerced internal migrations and diasporas of Mexican American families. (*Que* 120)

By the time the interviewers began to talk with the women, Anglo California was firmly entrenched and most of the powerful families had lost most of their land. The change in the tax code caused great economic hardship for the women who attempted to hold onto their land. Many had to sell pieces of land to pay taxes or worse, to pay lawyer's fees to

defend their titles. In an exercise of power and paternalism, the Anglo squatters had decided that they had more of a right to the land because, much like their Puritan ancestors had thought of Native Americans, they thought that the Mexican landowners were unable to “properly subdue the natural environment” (Smith 56). The implication also exists that women are unable to efficiently run a rancho by themselves and did not deserve control of the land.<sup>12</sup> The assertion of patriarchal Anglo power that strips Mexican women of their land leads to a situation of dispossession that the women discuss in terms of trauma and personal violence.

In another example of historical allegory, Teresa de la Guerra briefly describes how lawyers and squatters had seized most of her father’s land (55).<sup>13</sup> It is important to remember that as Sánchez points out:

Californio women were [...] highly valued within the patriarchal structure. Their value is fully appreciated in the testimonial reconstructing women as a fertile field for reproduction, production, and trade; here constructs of feminine gender are overdetermined and serve in the testimonials as allegorical representations of the nation, or more often the case, of the land itself. (203)

De la Guerra’s testimonio reflects how her father strategically married her off to a wealthy American. She was almost sixteen when her father and new husband joined their business enterprises through arranging the marriage (51). Her marriage is allegorical as is a story she tells Cerruti about a Frenchman, Don Duflot de Mofras, who visited her home. Among other behaviors, the man enters her home without permission, rifles through her personal papers, acts overly familiar with her, drinks all of her reserve wine and passes out naked, and lies to her by telling her that her husband had said she would provide him

with anything he wanted. When de la Guerra's husband returns, she discovers that she has been "tricked by an audacious and unscrupulous adventurer who resorted to lies to achieve his goal" (66). While Vallejo resorts to her wits to protect the women in her house, this uncouth Frenchman uses "tricks" to access hospitality and possessions he does not deserve. Bancroft dismissed this part of de la Guerra's testimonio as unfounded and untrue and would not include the information in his history. However, this account accurately reflects the way de la Guerra felt about the American invasion into California. She and her family had been tricked, taken advantage of, and stolen from by Americans. She clearly feels violated by the Frenchman's forwardness, and the discovery that he has stolen a black dress that she had planned to wear to one of her children's baptism (as well as his blatant nakedness and assertion that her husband had made him welcome to her and their home) underscores the sexual presumptions that he had made in her home. De la Guerra connected his behavior to the lawyers and squatters who had seized her land. Her story illustrates the sexual violence implicit in land dispossession.

In all of the women's testimonios, there is evidence that the women knew they had to confront colonialist, racist, and sexist violence against their bodies, their land, and their social positions. Each of these stories reveals how women resorted to wits to protect herself, her land, and other women from domestic violence. Vallejo says that she wanted to save the Californio women from more trouble, so part of her resistance was using skills available to her and other women to protect the community. It's a supposition, but supported by their accounts, that women were using all the agency available to them, including stereotypical female behaviors, to ensure safety. Lorenzana and Pérez take it upon themselves to protect the neophyte women, while De La Guerra is concerned for



her sisters' welfare as well as her own. They use their wits to protect themselves from Mexican, American, Indian, French, and other men. The men are their husbands, fathers, brothers, interviewers, at intimate levels, and are their Fathers, governors, conquerors, soldiers, captors, at state levels. When they can, the women seize power through traditional means—money, business, marriage, or manipulation. When those avenues are not available, they use disguise, food ways, neighborhood gossip, illness, birth control, or other resources that are only available to women. They select more than one artifice depending on the situation they face. Their ingenuity allows them to confront domestic violence as it appears on their bodies, homes, communities, and nation.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I use “testimonio” to refer to the California women’s stories, even though the word is more commonly used to refer to oral histories by women of Latin America, the most famous (and controversial) being that of Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan woman, whose story can be found discussed in *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*, edited by Arturo Arias. Rosaura Sánchez uses “testimonio” to refer to the narratives because as she notes, the genre is “not new” and stems from the colonial *crónicas* and is, for all intents and purposes in Bancroft’s project, “mediated narratives by a subaltern person interviewed by an outsider” (7). While there are certainly concerns to be raised with Sánchez’s definition, the term has taken off as a category of analysis and literary-historical genre. Critics use “testimonio” to encompass speech in post-Suharto Indonesia (see Annie Pohlman’s “*Testimonio* and Telling Women’s Narratives of Genocide, torture and Political Imprisonment in Post-Suharto Indonesia,” *Life Writing* 5.1 (2008): 47-60) to a story of a Latvian Jew living in Switzerland (see Lynn Walford’s “Truth, Lies, and Politics in the Debate over Testimonial Writing: The Cases of Rigoberta Menchú and Binjamin Wilkomirski,” in *The Comparatist*, 30 (2006): 113-21) to complications with the very form itself in terms of authenticity and literary value (see Linda Marie Brooks’s “*Testimonio*’s Poetics of Performance,” in *Comparative Literature Studies*, 42.2 (2005): 181-222, and John Beverly’s *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth*).

<sup>2</sup> It seems that the interviewers took questions they would have asked men (questions about wars, revolts, military maneuvers, generals, and governors) and posed them to the women. The results of these lines of questioning show that women were intimately involved in the political, economic, and social history of Mexican California. Teresa de la Guerra directly confronts the quite biased *Travels in California* and its representations of Mexican American women in her testimonio. It is also interesting that in California, Mexican American women had many rights that the American women’s movement calls for in 1848. Ironically, as American women gathered at the Seneca Falls Convention to demand rights, Mexican American women in California lost their rights as the Anglo laws regarding gender gained credence, especially with regard to land-ownership and political participation.

<sup>3</sup> Testimonios and autobiography are necessarily mutable. As Juan Velasco accurately explains, “Chicana/o autobiography rejects monolithic forms of thinking in order to emphasize process (crossing)

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and the continuous reconceptions of identity. Such autobiographical writing rejects specific identity formations and their ideology, and creates new processes of identity formations” (323). The process of identity formation is important to the California testimonios because they have come through many filters. The women were interviewed—most were willing to give interviews—by men who spoke Spanish and English. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and written down. As the interviewers could not tape record the interview, it is likely that some women’s remarks were left out. Sometimes the men reconstructed the interviews in their later reports. The interviewers edited out the questions in many cases. The women’s testimonios have recently been recovered from the Bancroft archive and published in Spanish; they have also been translated into English. Where possible, I have opened space for the women’s words, rather than my summary of what they said. While these testimonios are not self-generated works, they allow a rare glimpse into the daily lives and concerns of different classes of women in California.

<sup>4</sup> It’s unclear whether Filomena wanted to speak to Cerruti, or whether, like Rosalía Vallejo, she gave an interview because of her relationship to Mariano Vallejo and his need to appear cooperative with the Bancroft project.

<sup>5</sup> Other possibilities exist of course—that Filomena was too old to need birth control by the time she married Bill, that they never consummated the marriage, etc.—but because she had been very fertile in her earlier marriage, she may have chosen to restrict her reproduction with the unloving man. She could have used a variety of herbs, selective abstinence, or resorted to other tricks that I will discuss in a later section.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Cerruti gloats over his many purchases from Filomena in his metanarrative of her interview. He also believes that her husband Bill is her son. The lack of concern with which he conducts the interview brings ethical questions to the forefront.

<sup>7</sup> She certainly meant to talk about the relationship with women because her testimonio was in Spanish and she used the feminine nouns.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter Four also discusses how girls’ education is essential to combating domestic violence. Americo Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez* shows the tragedy of suspending girls’ educations.

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<sup>9</sup> Cerruti seems to be the least sympathetic of the interviewers. He's the one who wrote Vallejo's story in English, even though she spoke in Spanish and claims to have never learned English because she hates Americans. He also manipulated Isidora Filomena into "selling" him her only prized possessions.

<sup>10</sup> I explore some of these conflicts in Chapter Five.

<sup>11</sup> Cerruti's treatment of Vallejo during her description of Frémont's atrocities fits this description, as well as Bancroft's dismissal of some of Teresa de la Guerra's descriptions.

<sup>12</sup> Many critics have discussed how feminization of the land in the West leads to subjugation of nature and erasure of women in the West. Mexican American women who had enjoyed some political and social power were unwilling to relinquish their land, and these conflicts and the bitterness they produce is evident in their testimonios.

<sup>13</sup> Beebe and Senkewicz also read her remarks as historical allegory suggesting that she used the story "as a way of expressing her strong resentments against all the foreigners who had come to her land with preconceived notions about the inferiority of Californios" (55).

## Chapter Two: Historical Romance and Violence in the Land

While the last chapter established the California testimonios as urgent historical projects, other fictional works also held potential for historical significance and social reform. Californian Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton emphasized how important it was that the respondents in Bancroft's project give Californios a "historic good name." Even though she was not interviewed for Bancroft's history, she used her novels *Who Would have Thought It?* (1872) and *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) to support the idea that California women were as good as (actually, better than) Yankees. Other California writers aspired to evoke the kind of social rage that Harriet Beecher Stowe had with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852); Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884) attempted to address the "Indian problem" in California and to shame the US government and racist peoples. Commenting on the plight of the Californios, Gertrude Atherton's *The Californians* (1898) sympathized with the unfair loss of status and land. The authors in this chapter deal with perceptions of whiteness and domestic violence as a national policy. I begin with an examination of domestic violence perpetrated on the racialized woman's body in popular fiction. I use *Ramona* to expose the ways that women appear to deserve domestic violence—both from within the family and from the national, imperial project. *Ramona* closes off possibilities for expansion of the American family through their pessimistic views of reproduction. The text's goals seem to reflect a nativist project that protects the Anglo American family from the contamination of racialized others, even though Jackson claimed to be sympathetic to the plight of Others. I then turn to less popular narratives penned almost simultaneously in which elite Californio characters respond to the

changing political and cultural environment. In *The Squatter and the Don* and *The Californians* Mexican American women resort to wits to resist domestic violence, but ways the heroines are portrayed (with regard to honor, beauty, and worthiness) vary to reflect the different biases of the authors.

Domestic violence factors in the novels of this time period (loosely 1884-1899) as a multifaceted critique on US policy toward Mexicans and Indians in California, but the writers comment on events that happened only ten to thirty years earlier. In these novels, domestic violence certainly assumes a double meaning, especially with regard to race and assimilation into the nation, but because I include Anglo writers in this chapter, I expand the uses of domestic violence as a double voiced discourse to reflect anxieties about nativism and nationalism as well. In this way, I borrow from Walter Benn Michaels' comments on assimilation possibilities: "This rewriting of both race and nation as family corresponded to two important shifts in racial logic, one that emphasized not the inferiority of „alien“ races but their „difference,“ and a second that began to represent difference in cultural instead of political (and in addition to) racial terms" (11). While he is referring to the modernist writers, I argue that the writers in this chapter foreshadow the rewriting of cultural difference through the historical romance genre, bending both the genre and racial categories.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, while these novels seem to be historical romances (or just romances, as the subtitle of *The Squatter and the Don* is *A Novel Descriptive of Contemporary Occurrences in California*, indicating that it is not meant to be historical at all), they reveal more when read as discussions of biological determinism masked as romance. Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*

argues, “the double dealing romance actually helped to give a cognitive expression and emotive mooring to the social and political formations it articulates” (51). These novels, then, are not simple romances; rather they are representations of Mexican identity in California that serve to support or subvert government policies of land dispossession and domestic violence toward conquered subjects. Symbolically, domestic violence comes to represent the ways in which outside influences (class and racial differences, US policies, and capitalism) attempted to police and maintain racial separateness. As the protagonists experience domestic violence, there is a subtext in *Ramona* and *The Californians* that the women deserve domestic violence because they are, as hybrid subjects, racially inferior to the Americans inflicting the violence on their land and persons. Furthermore, the domestic violence perpetrated on the protagonist has a direct impact on the material conditions of her life. Domestic violence works on multiple levels, by making the home and the nation unsafe spaces for the protagonists; moreover, their financial security erodes in the novels, making them even more vulnerable to domestic violence than they had been initially.

*Ramona*, popular within its own time period and canonically accepted literature currently, reveals dominant Anglo perceptions of violence on the mestiza female body. The novel focuses on this violence as a way of revealing injustice, but insidiously, the narrative backs away from a social reform position and indicates that the violence on mestiza/Indian/Mexican bodies can be justified through biological determinism. The text enacts its own domestic violence by ideologically participating in Manifest Destiny, even though the author herself claims to be promoting an entirely different cause. A brief summary of the novel: Ramona, the adopted mestiza daughter of Señora Moreno, is an

innocent, pious young woman living peacefully on a California rancho. Ramona falls in love with an Indian sheep-shearer, Alessandro. They get married and move away from the ranch; but there is no place for them to go safely due to land laws that displace Indians. They have two children, one of whom dies from lack of care. Alessandro goes mad, steals a horse, and is murdered. Felipe Moreno finds Ramona, marries her, and they move to Mexico.

Jackson, who claimed to be answering the “Indian question” by raising awareness for Native rights actually denigrates Mexican Americans through the portrayal of Señora Moreno. Ramona’s adoptive mother Señora Moreno views Ramona as culturally inferior to the Spanish Morenos due to the contamination of her Indian blood and treats her violently.<sup>2</sup> Because the Señora sees Ramona as inferior, she treats the girl as if she is already sexually deviant, in need of strict control, and ignorant. Instead of blaming emergent American racial and legal codes for Ramona’s misfortune, Jackson holds the residual Spanish Californio landowners responsible for violence against Natives. Certainly, the missions and the Mexican land granting system caused widespread death and slavery for Natives in California; however, because Jackson seems to want to affect American treatment toward Natives, the initial demonizing of Señora Moreno seems out of place. The domestic violence on Ramona’s mestiza body highlights the hypocrisy of Jackson’s project—Anglo sympathy for Ramona’s plight never spurs any kind of action; instead, the audience feels superior to the feudalistic and undemocratic Spanish Californios and simultaneously protected from mestiza identities when Ramona departs for Mexico. Other forms of domestic violence in the novel occur as the Moreno ranch is



slowly eaten away by land disputes supported by US law, and Ramona and Alessandro must continue to move their home in order to seek permanence and safety.

As a symbolic mestiza, Ramona holds potential for evoking sympathy in Anglo readers, especially with her easy commitment to domesticity and innocence aided by her blue-eyed beauty. She is not a threatening presence as long as she remains virginal and unable to contaminate the national body politic through reproduction. Señora Moreno comments about Ramona, “If the child were pure Indian, I would like it better [...] I like not these crosses. It is the worst, and not the best of each, that remains” (40). Yet, the later description of Ramona, through Father Salvierderra’s eyes, shows that she is hybrid, but beautiful nonetheless: “Ramona’s beauty was of the sort to be best enhanced by the waving gold which now framed her face. She had just enough of olive tint in her complexion to underlie and enrich her skin without making it swarthy. Her hair was like her Indian mother’s, heavy and black, but her eyes were like her father’s, steel-blue” (52). These passages suggest that the Señora cannot appreciate Ramona’s hybridity but the Father, as a member of the Church, embraces the Indian. Jackson, following practices of the day to cast Indians as helpless, describes Ramona’s life: “The few romances and tales and bits of verse she had read were of the most innocent and old-fashioned kind [...] She had fed the birds, taken care of the flowers, kept the chapel in order, helped in light household work, embroidered, sung, and, as the Señora eight years before had bade her do, said her prayers and pleased Father Salvierderra” (114-15).<sup>3</sup> As John González points out, the sympathy evoked by a domestic Ramona plays into the project Jackson attempts: “Jackson wanted her reform activities to appear within the bounds of philanthropic domesticity [and perhaps inadvertently they] would facilitate the explicit merger of

domestic practices with those of colonial management” (445). In other words, by encouraging Anglo women to step into the realm of public policy through domestic concerns, Jackson validates a colonialist project toward Natives that results in violence more substantial than that Señora Moreno perpetrates.

In trying to evoke sympathy and encourage better treatment for Indians, *Ramona* falls woefully short. Instead, Jesse Alemán argues, “Radical as it is, Jackson’s novel rests on a historical contradiction: it wants to generate sympathy for Indian affairs by highlighting the cultural conditions that oppress mission Indians, yet it resolves its own conflict by seeing Indian identity as a biological category destined to extinction anyway” (76). Furthermore, the failure of the novel reasserts American policy as domestic violence against Natives and mestizas. The new California is not a safe place for them, as evidenced by Alessandro’s murder and Felipe’s growing disgust at the American land-hungry ways, and they have little choice but to leave or become second-class citizens in the emerging racial hierarchy. Because the novel was so popular, it led to “literary tourism and homesteading, further displacing Indian communities as more white settlers migrated to the area” (John González 455). Certainly, Jackson’s story had unintended consequences, but the crux of the novel, domestic violence toward Native communities, is spear-headed by Señora Moreno, which makes the actual consequence of exiling her son, Felipe, and Ramona to Mexico seem logical and just, while masking the resolution’s participation in the colonizing project of the United States. As González goes on to remark, “Indian reform novels facilitated white women’s direct involvement in the management of US empire” (455). Work on reservations and in boarding schools fueled the myth of a white savior, even as such work is well documented to have done

tremendous violence to Native communities.<sup>4</sup> *Ramona*'s legacy then excuses white domestic violence by misassigning blame for violence against Indians and mestizas solely to the Californios.

Because *Ramona*'s marriage decisions are somewhat dictated by the Señora and Father Salvierderra, her ability to make her own choices follow the model of many of the women who gave interviews to the Bancroft project. However, *Ramona*'s predicament is fictional, and therefore allegorical for the constraints on mestiza women's behavior within the family. When she comes upon *Ramona* and Alessandro as they are declaring their love, Señora Moreno responds to *Ramona*'s declarations by striking *Ramona* on the mouth and "seizing her by the arm, she pushed rather than dragged [*Ramona*] up the garden-walk" (151). Señora Moreno attempts to silence *Ramona*'s choices and seeks to isolate her from Felipe and Alessandro by locking her in her room. This response—silencing through striking, forced movement, and cloistering—is a violent pattern that continues throughout the novel as *Ramona* and Alessandro are forced into a nomadic lifestyle by American land greed. It's significant that the first instance of domestic violence *Ramona* experiences is from a Californio because the text locates the originary point of violence against Indians as a result of the Spanish conquest. While this is true, the violence that makes it impossible for *Ramona* and Felipe to remain in California after the deaths of Señora Moreno and Alessandro is the American legal violence that permeates the landscape for all Mexican and mestiza subjects. *Ramona*, feeling herself free for the first time, runs away despite the threats of violence and poverty that Señora Moreno heaps on her head, including disinheritance and disgrace from the Church in the form of Father Salvierderra's disapproval. The text blames Señora Moreno for domestic

violence, but it also implicitly suggests that Ramona deserves this violence, because she is running away with an Indian man. While the Señora has control over Ramona's destiny, she wants Ramona to marry worthily; yet, she does not indicate what kind of match Ramona could make. She is not Mexican, as her father was Scotch-Irish and her mother was Native. Ramona, once she discovers she is half-Indian, embraces that identity, shakes off the Mexican identity of the Morenos, and declares that it was natural that she would love Alessandro. However, the hard life the future holds for Ramona and Alessandro is due to their inferior status in the hierarchy of California racial politics. By refusing her Mexican upbringing, Ramona has embraced the presumed "baseness" of her Indian blood, according to Señora Moreno, and therefore she deserves the violence that follows as she and Alessandro struggle to find a place to be a family in safety.

Señora Moreno bears the brunt of much of the text's negative portrayals. While some of the characterization makes sense with regard to genre (the hero and heroine must have someone who opposes their union), the exaggerated malfeasance of Señora Moreno's actions toward Ramona signify the Señora's response to her own domestic violence. The way she responds to violence against her makes her even more reprehensible to Anglo womanhood—and the likely audience for the novel. She hates Anglos and delights that her home's back door faces the road. She imagines this placement as if her house had turned its back on the Anglo travelers and customs.<sup>5</sup> Like Rosalía Vallejo, she enacts her disdain for Anglos through rejection of their social mores, language, and infrastructure. Vallejo claims to have never learned the English language, while Señora Moreno "grew more and more proudly, passionately, a Spaniard and a Moreno; more and more staunchly and fierily a Catholic" (29). Her ties to the

Spanish/Mexican/Catholic past make Señora Moreno unsympathetic to an Eastern audience, which supports Jackson's discussion of the Indian problem by holding Californios responsible for the initial violence done to Natives in California.

While Vallejo uses the term "resort to tricks" as a positive description of how she saved the young Indian girl from the army, the discussion of how Señora Moreno runs the hacienda is a grudgingly admiring, yet negative portrayal of a woman resorting to wits to manipulate the men around her. The Señora's skill is thus: "Never to appear as a factor in the situation; to be able to wield other men, as instruments, with the same direct and implicit response to will that one gets from a hand or a foot,--this is to triumph, indeed: to be as nearly controller or conqueror of Fates as fate permits" (14). Jackson draws a parallel here between men and fate, indicating that Señora Moreno is trying to conquer (with a play on conquistador) both. The Señora resorts to her wits in order to convince Felipe to postpone sheep shearing and thereby to retain Alessandro as head shearer, which will allow the Father to indoctrinate the Indians. Because she is Catholic, she uses her connection to the church and the Father to support her verbal subterfuge. Her tricks, then, affect Indian, Anglo, and Spanish men in order to serve her own purposes. Rosemary King describes the portrayal of the Señora as an example of "*hembrismo*" the female equivalent of machismo, marked by "a strong-willed and stubborn female figure" (8). While this characterization of the Señora may seem positive and even nascent feminist, it actually censures the Mexican matriarch for being an obstacle to the young people's love.

The text takes a decidedly anti-feminist tract by stating, "The Señora was of the past; Ramona was of the present" (32). There are several ways to read this assertion. In

the most charitable reading possible, the line could indicate that Ramona, as a hybrid subject, is the present and the future of California. However, the plot does not bear out this reading because the hybrid Ramona leaves California for the utopian promise of hybrid Mexico. It is more likely that this line suggests that the Señora, who is a strong Mexican woman running the hacienda is an obsolete part of the past and that the docile, submissive Ramona is acceptable present behavior for non-Anglo women.

Alessandro and Ramona have to move away from their home multiple times. In each instance, Anglo settlers encroach on the land, usurping Indian rights to the homesteads, a fact which makes a clear link between domestic violence as part of their home and domestic violence done to them as part of a nation. While the text established Señora Moreno as the instigator of domestic violence against Ramona and Alessandro, the US government's policies toward Indians continues the violence and makes it impossible for Ramona and Alessandro to have a home. After moving several times, they go to Saboba, but Ramona overhears white settlers talking about their desire to have access to the spring that runs through the Indian village (391). Ramona and Alessandro believe that living close to other Indian families will protect them, but the advantages of civilization do not materialize. The government doctor fails to save their baby's life; indeed, he refuses to trouble himself to make a house call for an Indian child, even though his charge is to be a doctor for the Indians. However, the final straw that sends Ramona and Alessandro to the mountain away from all civilization is the day that Ramona butchers a cow that Alessandro had killed. A party of whites comes and accuses them of stealing the animal. More troubling, one of the men singles Ramona out for his own domestic violence plots: "A new terror had entered into Ramona's life [...] she was

haunted by the face of the man Jake, as by a vision of evil [...] he wished to have an Indian woman come to live with him and keep his house” (416). Because he does not believe that Indian marriages are real, Jake thinks he can take Ramona away from her home by force or bribery. As Ramona and Alessandro isolate themselves, moving up the mountain, they mistakenly think they are moving away from the white entitlement to land, women, and nation.

The mountain home does not protect Ramona and Alessandro. Madness overtakes Alessandro as he constantly relives the visions of domestic violence: “Sometimes he fancied that the Americans were pursuing him, or that they were carrying off Ramona, and he was pursuing them [...] At other times he believed he owned vast flocks and herds” (422). These visions of his madness link domestic violence of the home, and especially the fear that Ramona will be raped by the Americans, to the domestic violence of the nation that has ensured that Alessandro and his people will not have vast flocks and herds. On the day Alessandro is murdered, he mistakenly takes a horse, leaving his pony in the corral. Believing that Alessandro has stolen his horse, the man follows him to the mountain home and there shoots Alessandro twice. Ramona’s testimony reveals that Alessandro had not threatened the murderer, but because she is a woman and a mestiza, her testimony means little legally. However, the judge, knowing that Alessandro was not to blame, feels badly that there will be no justice for Ramona and her child. The judge, then, feels that it is his duty to atone by “tak[ing] the child, and bring[ing] it up in his own house” (435). His impulse seems benign, but in fact, it reeks of the kind of domestic violence the entire text does to mestiza bodies. Ramona, raised by a family that is not hers, experiences domestic violence from the powerful Señora. However, even more

troubling is how the Judge's comment could be traced over the next century as Native people struggle to retain their rights to their homes and children through boarding schools and adoption laws.

When Alessandro is murdered, and Señora Moreno has died, Ramona returns with Felipe to the ranch and agrees to marry him. However, their marriage, with its dangerous blood mixing, cannot be a sanctioned relationship in the new California. Because they have lived as brother and sister for so long, their relationship is symbolically incestuous. Amy Kaplan points to several incest plots in novels as they serve to maintain the purity of the American family, or as she puts it, "This union between adopted brother and sister may enact the desire for a domestic space in which the family members are as alike as possible without violating the taboos of incest" (45). However, because Ramona is mestiza and not "pure Spanish," "she and Felipe, with his heartfelt desire to marry and miscengenate, must leave the US for Mexico in order to keep the nation free of the insidious atavistic influence of mixed blood" (González 454). With their loss of status and land, they are not able to assimilate into the American family. *Ramona's* plot precedes the modernist nativist desire to be "supremely American" Michaels describes, "It's in this context not only that miscegenation, the breaking down of difference, becomes the privileged sex crime of nativist modernism (and incest, the insistence on identity, becomes its privileged form of sexual expression) but also that assimilation [...] becomes a threat both to those who would assimilate and those who would be assimilated" (78). Again, incest seems to be key to keeping miscegenation at bay, but *Ramona* reconfigures that brother/sister relationship to show that the "American family" is already mixed blood.<sup>6</sup>



Ramona's material conditions decline in relation to her experience of domestic violence. As a child, she had everything she could want, and her future is assured from the jewels her father collected and Señora Moreno's sister's money. However, when she goes to live with the Morenos, she begins to experience violence at the hands of Señora Moreno and her fortune is hidden away in the Señora's safekeeping. The climax of violence within her childhood home, when she defies the Señora to marry Alessandro, leads to a denial of her birthright, the jewels from her father. From that point on, the violence Ramona experiences is not limited to violence within the home; instead, government policies exacerbate the violence focused on Indian homesteads. Ramona confesses to Felipe, "When we were in such trouble, I used to wish sometimes that we could have had a few of the jewels" (482). She believes that the money could have protected her home and her family from the continued violence of Indian displacement and illness of her child and husband. Felipe's fortunes decline as well with the erosion of the Moreno land holdings. Finally, Ramona and Felipe see Mexico as the only place that will respect their claims to dignity and fortune. The American assault on their homes does not end with the deaths of Alessandro and Señora Moreno; the legacy of domestic violence continues to haunt them.

Because the novel fails to imagine a place for Ramona, Felipe, and Alessandro's daughter, the characters undergo seemingly freely chosen, self-imposed exile to Mexico. The narrative promises one type of social reform but delivers quite another, as Alemán writes, "Critical as it seems of American imperialism, then, *Ramona* nevertheless reproduces dominant narratives of race relations in the United States, with Indians, mestizos, and Californios naturally fated to extinction or removal and Anglos destined to

rule the nation” (81). The text goes further and enacts domestic violence on the minority subjects, but by blaming Californios for instigating violence on Indians, the novel stops short of pointing to US policy as a sole source of domestic violence within the nation.

If the popular texts cannot imagine a scenario in which violence against Mexican and elite Californio bodies is underserved, can texts that were less popular and authored by a Californio and a more sympathetic Anglo woman articulate a position that challenges American policy? I turn to María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don* and Gertrude Atherton’s *The Californians* to argue that although their depictions of their heroines are very different, both authors show how forces of domestic violence allegorically reflect the nation and the disease of the patriarchal body politic. As the material conditions of the protagonists decline, they become more vulnerable to domestic violence.

Ruiz de Burton and Atherton both have investments in protecting whiteness and power through their narratives. The historical context of the novels necessitates a short discussion of race in California after the US Mexico War. Tomás Almaguer’s discussion of class and race helps set the scene for the ways the novels depict elite Californios:

Nineteenth-century relations between Mexicans and Anglos in California were powerfully determined by the class divisions within the two populations, divisions that led to divergent historical experiences for the Mexican working class and the *ranchero* elite. The introduction of a new, Anglo-dominated class structure led to bitter contention between powerful Mexican *rancheros* and European-American capitalists for control of the most arable land in the state. The strife that developed

between the old Mexican ruling class and Anglo capitalists initially overshadowed the ethnic conflict that occurred at other class levels. (45)

In both novels, the authors imagine reconciliation between the Mexican land owners and the American capitalists through intermarriage. However, domestic violence factors into these unions compromising their ability to unify and heal a divided state. The capitalism Ruiz de Burton, and to some extent Atherton, champions is a fantasy. Historical conditions that support emergent economic systems in the novels also have already become problematic. Therefore these novels attempt to reconcile race and class hierarchies that are already suspect in the new national climate.

*The Squatter and the Don* is a social reform novel, historical romance, economic treatise, and travel narrative as it layers plots and genres to reveal the fissures in California society after the American invasion. Yet, it may simultaneously be none of these things. As Lázaro Lima argues, “the Californio version of history offered by Ruiz de Burton’s elitist defense of Californio claims on American citizenship [...] demonstrate that the politics of race and national belonging is no romance” (55). At the center of the novel, supposedly, is the love story between settler (as opposed to squatter) Clarence Darrell and Mercedes Alamar. However, this romance plot often fades into the background to the more pressing economic and land matters for Don Mariano Alamar and his family. Furthermore, the romance plot is complicated by the material conditions that create the romance; Mercedes and her family need Clarence’s money in order to preserve their land holdings. The uncertainty of land claims in California in the 1860s and 70s led to Anglo squatters moving to California, occupying land that belonged to Mexican elites, attempting to grow grain, and shooting cattle. The Mexican land-owners

had little recourse from the American law and were required to pay taxes for the improvements the squatters had done to their lands. Set in 1872, but written in 1885, *The Squatter and the Don*'s discussion of land dispossession was still relevant to the class position of elite Californios. For instance, Josef Raab uses the example of Gabriel Alamar's (the Don's son who loses his position as a banker, becomes a hod carrier, and then is paralyzed) sudden poverty to argue that Ruiz de Burton believes "Ethnic hybridity [...] will work, while „class hybridity“ will not" (89-90). When poverty threatens the Californios, their indignation at the new system appears. Yet, Ruiz de Burton is not averse to emergent capitalism; she hopes though for a capitalism based on fairness and competition rather than monopoly. As Peter Chvany points out though, by 1885, "Profit imperatives had thrust genteel competition aside" (113), and railroads, the hope for San Diego's "taking Southern California out of its post-war isolationist disorder and integrating it into the country's progress and prosperity" (Raab 88), had turned into monopolistic beasts.

Don Mariano approves of Clarence for Mercedes, but Doña Josefa, his wife, does not. She encourages her husband to send Mercedes to New England, away from Clarence. Both parents' actions constitute a form of domestic violence in that Mariano treats his daughter as a small child who needs his approval for adult decisions, whereas Josefa, upon realizing that Mercedes loves Clarence, contrives to cloister her by sending her away from home against her will. As the novel progresses, the squatters continue to kill Don Mariano's cattle until he sells them to Clarence. In the process of moving the cattle, a blizzard occurs, and Don Mariano contracts fatal pneumonia and his son Victoriano loses the feeling in his legs. The governmental sanctioning of the slaughter constitutes the

political forms of domestic violence against Californios that leads to the decimation of Mercedes's fortune and birthright as the daughter of a landed Californio. The marriage between Clarence and Mercedes is anticlimactic, and the novel ends with a denunciation of Judge Lawlack and the railroad barons. Like the women of the testimonios, Mercedes's matrimonial choices are made for her within rigidly prescribed bounds of sexuality and race.

Gertrude Atherton's *The Californians* also narrates how domestic violence within the home is a reflection of the violent legacy of conquest at the nation's borders. The novel tells the story of Don Roberto and his daughter Magdalena. Originally, Don Roberto had been a landed Californio, but with the American invasion, he was forced to compromise with Americans on his land holdings. His Yankee friend, Hiram Polk,<sup>7</sup> who married his sister and whose sister he married, seemed to provide the answer, as Polk took Don Roberto under his wing and gave him a respectable finance job. With their double marriage there is a sense of the brother-sister incest that keeps the domestic space contained against the foreign, even though in this case there is a clear arrangement to keep the foreign contained within the domestic—as Polk and Roberto's sister have no children, and Roberto only has one—Magdalena.

After Polk's death, Don Roberto becomes a tyrant, locks himself in his offices, refuses to give his wife and daughter an allowance, and forbids them from leaving the home. Don Roberto claims that he is afraid that if he goes out or allows his family out of the home, he will revert to his old dissipating ways and will bring destruction to his finances and land. Roberto is also deeply saddened by Polk's death, so much so that he seems to go mad with the loss of his friend, business partner, and brother-in-law. In his

madness, he believes that the “Spanish” part of his identity is fundamentally flawed, and he cannot face the world, which leads him to commit suicide. The last sentence of the novel reads, “Don Roberto had hanged himself with the American flag” (351). Because he hangs himself in his study, he has brought colonial anxieties to the domestic space. But his death frees Magdalena to marry Trennahan (her lover who had initially run off with her best friend Helena), to renounce her religion (embracing atheism), and to write stories about Old California. Magdalena’s cultural memory and *mestizaje* enable a different construction of domestic space at the nation’s borders that directly challenges the logic of Manifest Destiny and the spheres that contain women to the home, religion, and conservative values.

Atherton and Ruiz de Burton construct their heroines in very different ways, but the romantic heroes of the stories are incredibly similar. Through their racialized constructions of the protagonists, the authors comment on whiteness, the potential for intermarriages in California, and the emergent modes of capital. For instance both Clarence and Trennahan fashion themselves as globetrotting capitalists who have finally found a rich woman with whom to settle down. Mercedes is rich in land, and, by marrying her, Clarence shores up his claim to the land he already owns. Clarence’s attitude toward wealth is blasé, yet, as Alemán contends, “the immateriality of Clarence’s material possessions highlights perhaps the most profound form of narrative amnesia: the novel tries to forget that Clarence is an Anglo profiting from Manifest Destiny” (69). The amnesia that allows ignoring Clarence’s complicity in taking land from Californios in the first place is a form of domestic violence that allows for a fantastical version of capitalism to predominate. Trennahan, Magdalena’s lover, also profits from Manifest

Destiny. If he marries Magdaléna, her father and uncle had “agreed that Trennahan must become the guardian of their joint millions” (130). According to Don Roberto and Hiram Polk, Trennahan had proven himself by his worldliness and his ability to move into their neighborhood and social circles seamlessly. Likewise, Chvany attempts to argue that Ruiz de Burton shows, through Clarence’s father, that “genteel domestic feminism can address the crises of racism and monopoly expansion” (111). However, I argue that the crises of racism and monopoly expansion are exacerbated by Manifest Destiny and neither Ruiz de Burton nor Atherton’s Anglo characters are able to tame domestic violence through marriage to the Don’s daughters.

The texts reaffirm a masculine benevolence in their capitalist Anglo heroes, but it is at the expense of Californio men. Just as Jackson’s Felipe is frail and sickly, the Californio men of *The Squatter and the Don* and *The Californians* appear to be genetically inferior to the Anglo invaders because they succumb to natural and manmade disasters. While all the calamities that befall the Californio men and their sympathizers in *The Squatter and the Don* (suicide, pneumonia, paralysis, shooting, madness, etc.) seem like accidental catastrophes, they can all be traced back to US policies that enact domestic violence upon a class of people within the nation. For instance, when he is helping Don Mariano, his father, move the cattle to Arizona, Victoriano is a victim of the sudden freezing temperatures, which lead to paralysis. In large part, his health disaster is a result of the government’s refusal to protect the rights of ranchers. If the government had not given squatters a free pass to the land and allowed them to shoot the Don’s cattle without repercussions, Victoriano and his father would not have sold their cattle to Clarence and been driving them over the mountains in a blizzard. Additionally, Don

Mariano's other son, Gabriel, is paralyzed as a result of policies that exclude Mexicans from positions of power within the urban economy. He loses his position at the bank without Clarence there to vouch for him. He turns to manual labor to earn money for his wife and child, but in the midst of his workday, he is pinned under a load of bricks. The ambulance that transports him to the hospital must wait for carriages carrying wealthy San Franciscans to pass before it can proceed, which wastes valuable time and compromises his health. The only male body in the novel to remain unscathed is Clarence's, as he recovers from typhoid with no ill effects. Furthermore, in *The Californians*, Don Roberto's madness is bodily as well as mental. He hangs himself with the American flag in a highly symbolic moment of protest.

Mercedes, the heroine of Ruiz de Burton's novel, appears to be an innocent child, yet she is particularly subject to domestic violence from the family that both arranges for her to marry Clarence and attempts to keep her away from the filthy squatters. However, her name also means land grant, so that she is already implicated in the transferrable lands of California. Because Ruiz de Burton constructs Mercedes as purely Spanish white, she implicitly argues for a privileged race and class status for elite Californios. The description of Mercedes reaffirms this privilege: "A tiny sunbeam played over Mercedes' forehead, making the little curls over it look like golden threads. Her head was thrown back a little and turned towards the window, displaying her white throat [...] The right hand rested over the coverlet, and it looked like a child's hand, so dimpled and white and soft" (140). The emphasis here is on how delicate and innocent Mercedes appears. Her innocence should evoke sympathy for her and her family when they are mistreated by squatters, monopolists, and Congress. Lisbeth Haas argues that María Amparo Ruiz de



Burton resists American invasion by using overwhelming Victorian ideals to position her Spanish blood heroines at the center of social mores and classic domestic womanhood (39). In other words, these characters on the frontier “do” Victorian better than Anglo American New England women; certainly this is the case in *The Squatter and the Don* when Mercedes goes to New England and shows them what genteel domesticity really is. Elisa Warford points out how Mercedes’s reactions to her love affair are constantly shown to be like a girl should behave, and she argues that this portrayal of Mercedes links her to a perceived audience: “With her light skin, blue eyes, and emotional displays, there is nothing unusual or exotic about Mercedes; she is like „most“ girls that Ruiz de Burton’s readers know, and thus the audience should be moved to sympathy—and hopefully to action—for her plight” (14). By showing Mercedes as white, and not exotic, Ruiz de Burton portrays Mercedes as resorting to only those socially acceptable feminine wiles—those related to being with her lover. Fainting, crying, kissing his letter, are all stereotypical ways for women to behave. In fact, they are more than acceptable—they are expected for women of a certain class, disposition, and dignity. They prove that Mercedes, who depends on these wiles to further the plot, is white and compliant to the domestic codes for women, but reliance on these “tricks” also robs Mercedes of much of her agency. Mercedes cannot subvert domestic constraints by resorting to her real wits, because supposedly, she does not know any other way to behave. While her body and actions are domestically constrained, she becomes a female ideal. Yet, by attempting to show Mercedes as compliant, Ruiz de Burton argues that the Californio elite will fit into a model of American domesticity from which they have already been excluded on the basis of race and class.

Mercedes's brother Gabriel and his American wife Lizzie also suffer misfortune in San Francisco, plunge into poverty, and take on a neglected, yet biologically determined social role. Their ability to survive under Manifest Destiny is compromised when a load of brick paralyzes Gabriel. Manual labor ruins his body and his chances for social advancement, and, as a result of his illness, his family becomes inferior in terms of race and class. Mercedes's unblemished reputation, contrasted with the startling ease with which Californios can lose class position, shows the tenuous position elite Californios held in late-nineteenth century California. Chvany reinforces this double-edged position by noting, "If Ruiz de Burton is arguing that racism is misdirected at certain people who should really be regarded as white, the possible corollary is that racial oppression is not inappropriate when directed elsewhere" (108). It stands to reason that perhaps, in addition to the other Mexican male bodies that carry disease—Victoriano's paralysis and Don Mariano's pneumonia, Gabriel's broken legs signify the logical decline of the Californio patriarchy that is replaced by the hybrid unions of American men and Californio women. The decline of the Mexican male body comes as a result of railroad monopolies and failed business ventures and land ownership, so that Alemán's comments bear out: "The novel levels a scathing critique of U.S. imperialism—not because it excludes Californios, dispossessing them of their land and livelihood, but because it does not *include* them in the privileged category of white class mobility in the first place" (67). In insisting on whiteness, Ruiz de Burton makes the argument that there is an American family that is doing domestic violence to the elite Californios—manifested through the portrayal of gender in which the men are emasculated and paralyzed and the women hyper-feminized.

The decline of material conditions for Mercedes and her family seems to set up multiple binaries that expose domestic violence: Anglo/Californio, woman/men, old/young, etc., but Sánchez and Pita suggest that the dichotomies the text sets up are not the squatter/don, but perhaps the powerless/powerful in light of land laws and governmental corruption. Their reading argues that the central dichotomy is monopoly/entrepreneur. The shift to analysis based on material conditions shows that as laws stripped away protections for the Californio home, the only refuge was an alliance with the luckier emergent businessman. In this way, the execution of domestic violence and displacement of the female protagonist benefits from an application of Raymond Williams's residual, dominant, and emergent discussion. The land battles are already residual in the novel, even as it proposes to center these conflicts in the title. The conflict between the powerful and powerless is the dominant theme of the novel, with the less powerful groups left vulnerable to domestic violence as the novel progresses. Certainly the shooting and the usurpation of the Michlin's home is an exaggerated form of domestic violence so that not only is the family injured within their home, but then they are denied their very existence as occupiers of a home space. Clarence is the emergent face of investment capital, modern economics, and the realization of Manifest Destiny. He travels around the world, as is his supposed right as the emerging elite. Yet, his memory holds him to the land, so he buys the rancho, as well as the farm that his family had leased. These land purchases are residual forms of capital, hedges against dominant and emergent investments, such as stocks, which the investor never sees.

Mexican Americans were logically unwilling to shed their majority status. However, the system of laws and regulations in California is simultaneously stripping

them of land and civil rights, and relegating them to the status of the working class, “greaser” Mexican. This identity creates a double consciousness in which there is awareness of how one is seen and the incongruence that creates with regard to how one sees oneself. The narrative has sympathy for the Southern landowner, constructs the railroad as a visual symbol linking the South with the Southwest, and laments the mismanagement of Reconstruction. In this sympathy for the conquered southern United States, there is the shadow of displaced elite Californios onto the white plantation owner whose way of life (and economic structure) had radically changed. Significantly, this congruence of South and California evokes a very dramatic history of domestic violence within the nation. Civil War and Reconstruction contribute to the continued victimization of the South and to a degree, San Diego. The reason the railroad will not run to San Diego is to punish the southern United States by not giving them a railroad line for their goods, yet refusal to the South also projects national domestic violence onto Californios whose fortunes also depend on the agricultural and industrial development of the South. The failure of the railroad undermines the material conditions of San Diego and leaves the families that would have profited from the railroad vulnerable to more domestic violence from the state.

Interestingly, Ruiz de Burton views herself as simultaneously white and Californio and writes the novel from that perspective. However, Atherton whose claim to whiteness as an Anglo is undisputed, sees herself as sympathetic to the Californios, who by extension are not quite white. In her novel, Magdaléna is not only not white (even though she is technically more white than Mercedes) but she is a bad hybrid, resulting in downright ugliness: She “had only a pair of dark intelligent eyes to reclaim an uncomely

face. Her skin was swarthy, her nose crude, her mouth wide” (4). Even when she blushes, like so many women do in the historical romance, it is not a pretty, feminine blush, but a “dark ugly red” (4). Her lack of feminine beauty marks her as deserving of domestic violence even as the author claims sympathy for the land loss and unfair business practices levied on Californios. There is domestic violence both within Magdaléna’s chosen family of her friend Helena Belmont and Trennahan as well as her biological family of Don Roberto and his wife. Allegorically these instances of violence indicate pathological violence within Mexican American communities that the American influence cannot breed out. Inadvertently, Atherton suggests that Californios are to blame for their own disenfranchisement, and while Mercedes resorts to stylized feminine tricks to get what she wants, Magdaléna cannot control her Spanish impulsiveness.

Atherton establishes Magdaléna’s sexual deviance as a way of shoring up her difference from the good Victorian ideals of womanhood. When Helena (supposedly Magdaléna’s best friend) tries to find out what kind of man Magdaléna is interested in she guesses, derisively, a caballero—and remarks on all the negative associations that go with the man, one “who is too lazy to walk across the plaza, and too proud to work, and too silly to keep the Americans from grabbing all he’s got” (8). Yes, this *is* the kind of man Magdaléna fantasizes about, and she cannot hide it from her friends because “she had neither her sex’s quick instinct of self-protection nor its proneness to dissemble” (8). This exchange marks Magdaléna as queer—she is not of her sex—at the same time it blames Californios (and caballeros) for their own deserved destruction. Because she is unattractive, other characters assume that Magdaléna’s sexual desire might render her impetuous and able to give into temptation. She seeks sexual knowledge in odd places,

including from Helena's father, Colonel Belmont, who is reluctant to talk to her until he reasons with himself that she is "Repressed, unloved, intellectual, disappointed at every turn, passionate undoubtedly, --there was no knowing to what sudden extremes desperation might drive her. And the woman, no matter how plain, had yet to be born who could not be utterly bad if she put her mind to it" (72). This analysis of her character leads him to talk to her about sexual activity and how especially women who give birth out of wedlock create poverty. Neither Colonel Belmont nor his daughter sees Magdaléna as a real woman, capable of feminine virtue; perhaps, because of this, Magdaléna becomes a more real character who foreshadows feminist impulses beyond the realm of Victorian womanhood.

However, the novel does not portray Magdaléna's development as a positive reflection on her race. Charlotte McClure claims Magdaléna's "reactions to the people in her narrow environment and the effect of these reactions upon her personality tell the story of a young woman's initiation, a trail-and-error process of making her way through life, oscillating between passion and reticent pride, between secretiveness and yearning for attention, between aspiration and repression" (64). McClure generally characterizes Atherton's writing as generous toward Magdaléna, but I disagree. While Magdaléna certainly develops soundness of mind and spirit, she does so because her mestiza identity prevents her from being considered beautiful and refined. Her intellectual pursuits are rewarded, but again, she is held back by her ethnic identity; her stories are valuable only when she is writing about the Old California. Problematically, she is both responsible for documenting the Mexican presence in California as a romantic past, and she is unable to create a future presence for Mexicans in California. In this case, McClure misreads

Atherton's construction of Magdaléna. Even though there is "The contrast between Helena, the unchanging romantic ego, with Magdaléna, freeing herself from dependence to self-reliance" the claim that the author "has developed both types without judging either" (64) is faulty. Magdaléna's freedom comes at a high price.

Magdaléna chafes against the cloister of her home. Don Roberto, in locking her and her mother in the home, also forbids them from doing charity work. His fears, that he will revert to his old—gambling, wasteful—ways without the benign influence of his American brother-in-law Polk, cause him much paranoia. Additionally, Don Roberto fears that Magdaléna might have too much Spanish in her to be trusted either, and, seemingly to justify this fear, Magdaléna escapes one night into the wilds of San Francisco and finds herself "shrieking and struggling in the arms of a big golden-bearded Russian" (332). Yet, when she manages to escape his clutches, she "realized it was not relief she experienced, but something akin to disappointment. She was in the ugliest mood of which her nature was capable, and that was saying much" (332). The narrative never misses a chance to insult Magdaléna's temperament, sexuality, or looks. Here, the text implies that Magdaléna wanted to be raped by the masculine Russian, but the possibility of miscegenation is too much when class is also taken into account and she escapes physically unscathed, but mentally disturbed and angrier still at her father. Domestic violence leads to her imprisonment and is allegorically preemptive; Don Roberto fears his own racial inferiority and impulses so displaces them onto his family which reflects again a blaming of Californio culture for its own downfall. Secondly, domestic violence within the nation befalls her on her adventure as she encounters class and race differences within the city. She experiences a Dark Night of the Soul as she goes

into the city and faces her crisis of faith and abandonment by friends and family. As she encounters what losing all faith would mean, rape at the hands of a lower class and status Russian, she is disappointed but she also returns to her cloister to begin writing. Domestic violence within the nation shows the fault lines in race and class as it underscores how the unfortunate hybrid Magdaléna is better off by herself, not reproducing biologically, but writing stories about the California she remembers, which is already disappearing. Her role in the national family, then, is to provide an archive of memory that is already part of the colonial past.

Because she is so sexually volatile, Magdaléna's troubled relationship with Trennahan reflects ambivalence about Mexicans, marriage, and hybridity. When he breaks off his engagement with Magdaléna and chooses Helena over her, she reacts violently when Helena spurns his love: "Helena's sudden flight left Magdaléna staring through the dark at the Spanish dagger in her hand. Her arm was raised, her wrist curved; the dagger pointed toward the space which Helena had filled a moment ago" (287). This scene illustrates how Magdaléna, when faced with the loss of her lover, resorts to Mexican tricks. She intended to kill Helena with a Spanish dagger, instead of falling into a feminine faint the way Mercedes does when Clarence leaves. Within this love triangle, Magdaléna has been both victim and perpetrator of domestic violence. Her friends see her as less than human and go behind her back in their romantic relationship, excluding her from the white family. Helena rejects Trennahan because "he's had *liaisons* with married women; he's kept house with women; he's seen the worst life of every city!" (Atherton 285). His actions show that he has little respect for domestic propriety and Helena cannot keep him after discovering the taint that surrounds him. Furthermore, when the



relationship between Trennahan and Magdaléna finally does resume at the end of the novel upon Don Roberto's death, it serves to illustrate Warford's contention that "In Atherton's work, the Mexican wife acts as a symbol of conquest and a connection to the good life of the Californios, with those from the United States clearly adopting the position of the owner of the gaze, and the *californiana* the inferior object" (10). He and Magdaléna are only good enough for each other at that point, and their relationship is more intellectual than sexual, even though they both have sexual deviance—Trennahan's promiscuity, and Magdaléna's experience with the Russian—in their pasts. Magdaléna's reaction to Helena's story, and her violent attempt to hurt Helena, serves to illustrate the narrative's contention that Mexicans (no matter how white they appear) cannot control their impulses and desires. Just as Don Roberto needs to lock himself within his home to resist the temptations of the world, Magdaléna must realize that she too is not refined enough to pass for womanly in Anglo San Francisco.

Significantly, again, as Magdaléna's fortunes decline, she experiences more acutely the domestic violence of her father's control. As Don Roberto slowly goes mad, tightening the reins on the household finances, Magdaléna and her mother dream about how to spend their money. Her Anglo mother, chafing under the loss of a privileged life comments, "When I do get the money, won't I scatter it! I've been economical all my life, for I had it in my blood, and it was my duty, as your father wished it [...] When I am my own mistress, I'll give three balls and two dinners a week. I'll have the finest carriages and horses ever seen in California [and on and on]" (341). While being economical is "in her blood" as opposed to the Californios who have squandered their fortunes, Mrs. Yorba cannot wait to throw off her husband's dictates and be her "own

mistress.” Magdaléna envisions using the family fortune differently, to alleviate the pain of American law and domestic violence on the less prosperous Mexicans, as she explains to a former official of the Mexican government who had come to the house to beg money for bread, “I have little money to spend. If you will leave me your name and address, I will send you something on the first of each month; and if—if ever I have more I will take care of you—of all of you. I suppose there are many others” (344). Her statement shows that while she experiences domestic violence at the hands of her father, it is linked to the violence American laws and land grabs have done to the Mexican people. By resisting her father, Magdaléna also resists state violence. However, because she is on a limited budget, she cannot use her fortune to counter the domestic violence her people experience at the hands of government policies.

The forces of domestic violence that act on Mercedes and Magdaléna allegorically reflect the nation and the sickness the writers ascribe to the Mexican male body politic. While often domestic violence seems to originate in the family, the authors do show how that violence has roots in American policy toward Californios. The men are powerless to stop the violence against them and so reproduce that violence within the family. For instance, Don Roberto’s suicide starkly shows the origins of his malaise. He “had hanged himself with the American flag” (351), yet it is the same flag that he had dutifully cared for and hung above his rooms. The betrayal he feels as land and money disappear, even though he has tried to nip his vices, erupts in his suicide as he uses the symbol of American invasion to make a larger point about personal and community degradation. In *The Squatter and the Don*, the male body politic also falters in numerous ways, almost all as a result of the effects of American policy on Californio landowners.

Even George, an Anglo married to one of the Alamar daughters and an early enough immigrant to California to be considered of the same caliber as the Californios, is wounded by one of the squatters. His injury and the family's move to San Francisco leads to the invasion of their house by Roper, a squatter, who is supported by Judge Lawlack. The family cannot retrieve the home and again suffers domestic violence at the hands of national policy that favors squatters over those who had occupied the land earlier. In many ways, the deaths of the patriarchs in all of these novels seems biologically determined, but as Warford points out, "it is with good reason that Ruiz de Burton generally steers her novel away from a worldview in which humans have little or no control over their lives. Naturalism is not conducive to social reform" (16). While flaws in the character may have something to do with their deaths, the men are ultimately victims of political forces within the emerging legal system of California.

Despite the domestic violence in these texts, some possibilities for reform also emerge, even though the vision is sometimes complicit with Manifest Destiny and economic capitalism. Reproduction for the main characters is notably absent as a possibility. While some of the other couples have children, Clarence and Mercedes's marriage is anticlimactic in the text, overshadowed by railroad politics at the end of the novel. They may have children in the future, but these children are not the hope for the future. For Trennahan and Magdaléna, biological reproduction is unlikely. The narrative repeatedly describes her as an undesirable hybrid, and the text makes clear that he is not sexually attracted to her. Rather than biological reproduction, economic capitalism serves as a reproductive vehicle, creating money from hidden mines, land, and stocks. Alternatively, Don Mariano suggests making Southern California a wealth of orchards

and vineyards, which is a suggestion way ahead of his time. In its foresight his proposal supports Warford's contention that "Ruiz de Burton departs from historical romance to argue that the Californios are well suited to capitalism and are not caught hopelessly in the past, doomed to vanish, as they are depicted in other fiction of the time" (8). Ruiz de Burton's views on capitalism would bolster the possibility for economic reproduction if in fact Don Mariano's ideas could come to fruition, but the newly American California cannot absorb a Mexican presence that can adapt and change. Therefore, the Don dies and Mercedes marries the Anglo symbol of Manifest Destiny. Ultimately, Ruiz de Burton presents a fantasy of domestic capitalist harmony, one that is untenable in the reality of California under the railroad barons and corrupt judges.

Despite the fact that, like Helen Hunt Jackson, Atherton undermines the group she claims sympathy with, she holds out possibilities for social reform for Magdaléna. As she accepts the cloister her father has imposed on the family, she takes Trennahan's advice to write stories about what she knows. When Trennahan returns, he admits that he wants to write his book and marry Magdaléna. Both characters have suffered a loss of faith but have found the possibility for faith in their writing. Since there is no biological reproduction, they must be satisfied with intellectual production. The ability to use her intellect suggests that Magdaléna's thoughts are valuable even if her bloodline is not. The ability, then, to write is part of self-representation in opposition to the dominant narrative. Atherton, in closing off biological reproduction in a naturalistic approach, inadvertently opens up the possibility for reimagination of California from the perspective of a *californiana*—and validates the very fantasy of reform that Ruiz de Burton posits.

Fraught relationships to whiteness, especially with regard to changing historical conditions in Mexican American authored texts, resist dominant portrayals of Mexican women that see them as deserving of domestic violence. This chapter examines several novels that ultimately argue, through their characterizations, Mexican bodies, both men's and women's, are vulnerable to domestic violence from others in the home and in the national policy. There is a struggle to claim autonomy as political subjects through assimilation, and a simultaneous struggle to create new families that still retain cultural affinities toward the Mexican presence. Ultimately the novels and their female characters resist American entitlement to Mexican bodies, land, money, religion, and way of life. The next chapter takes this sense of entitlement further by showing how incursions of American tourists into Mexico create domestic violence incursions into foreign spaces

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, John González argues that Helen Hunt Jackson's 1881 exposé, *A Century of Dishonor*, serves to "[Cast] white violence against Indians as national fratricide [...] and remind the nation of its imagined kinship with the first Americans" (442). In this way, Jackson participates in the project of imagining a national "family" open to assimilation.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, it's interesting that the Señora's last name is Moreno (Brown) which also makes her racialized and part of a minority cultural group that is very clearly non-white.

<sup>3</sup> Compare this description of Ramona's life to that of the neophyte women Lorenzana and Pérez observe in the missions. Domesticity and control over sexual impulses are at the center of what the missions and fathers teach the young Indian women. Education does not free Ramona either, since all that she has read has protected her from the realities of the world.

<sup>4</sup> See *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, by Andrea Smith, *The Birth of the American Indian Manual Labor Boarding School: Social Control through Culture Destruction, 1820-1850*, by Jeffrey R. McDade, and *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, edited by Clifford Trafzer, Jean Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc.

<sup>5</sup> In some ways this evokes the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo when the US-Mexico border was redrawn and formerly Mexican citizens became "Americans"; like then, she had no control over where the border/road was, but she does control how she feels about it.

<sup>6</sup> The modernist William Faulkner does the same thing in *Absalom, Absalom!* by establishing a relationship between Charles Bon, a mulatto and his half-sister Judith Sutpen.

<sup>7</sup> Ironic most especially because James Polk was president during the US Mexico war as well as during the treaty negotiations for Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty was supposed to protect civil and property rights for Mexican Americans, but did not. The California land grabs are well documented in literature.

### Chapter Three: Foreign Incursions: Tourist Violence in Mexico

As turn of the century American tourists traveled to Mexico, they brought with them a sense of entitlement to the lands and peoples they were seeing, and their travel narratives often reflect their attitudes as they enact violence on Mexican bodies for the entertainment of the American reading public. No doubt, this stemmed in part from the results of the war as well as the way that Mexican elites marketed the country as a tourist destination, at the expense of the poor. After the Spanish-American War positioned the United States as a global player, and the Mexican Revolution ended, Americans became more interested in Mexico itself as a quaint tourist destination. The desire to travel in Mexico overtook soldiers during the US-Mexico War, women tourists after the Revolution, and hunters and sportsmen seeking Mexican game. Seeking a variety of activities, American tourists used cars and railroads to travel in Mexico, and for border residents much tourism occurred right on the border. The desire for tourism also stemmed from a fantasy of Mexico realized for American tourists. For some, the fantasy was of the exotic locale and people, the extension of the lawless Wild West, and the dime story imaginary of Mexican places. For others, the fantasy was a racially free zone where mestizos, blacks, Indians, and whites could intermix freely. For Americans, Mexico was a place of projected imperial desire. As they imposed their tourist impulses on the Mexican people and countryside, foreign tourists did violence on Mexico—both intentionally and by accident.

The history of American tourism in Mexico forms an illuminating backdrop to this chapter, which I will return to throughout the discussion of the texts; however, in the

interest of creating a broad, basic understanding of the trajectory of Mexico's tourist industry, I offer a brief introduction. There are four significant movements in the development of the tourist industry. The first movement began in 1846 and extended through 1900 with the legacy of the US-Mexico war. During the war, soldiers traveled through Mexico both as part of the army and later by themselves. Their dispatches home and descriptions of the Mexican countryside and people make them some of the first American tourists in Mexico (Boardman 22). When considering tourism as voyeuristic and conquering, it is evident that the role of the tourist is already complicated by the fact that some of the first tourists viewed Mexico as part of a conquering army. Former soldiers and journalists formed the bulk of the tourists who provided witty sketches for home audiences until the Revolution began in 1910. The second tourist movement occurred from 1900 to 1920. The Revolution put a damper on tourism proper, but did not abate the Americans' appetite for stories about Mexican peoples and places (Cocks 228). The third tourist movement, even with continued skirmishes through 1929, comprised leftist Americans seeking sympathy with the Revolutionary government and folklorists seeking contact with indigenous ruins and lasted from about 1920-1945 with the Good Neighbor Policy (Berger 108). The Mexican government exploited the folk tourism industry by encouraging American and European tourists to visit excavated ruins and observe indigenous peoples (Bueno 54-55). The fourth tourist movement began in the early 1950s, as recreational tourists seeking sand, surf and water lead to a shift from folkways to beaches (Schreiber 148). This movement continues to the present as infrastructure development in Mexico has led tourists to the Gulf and Pacific beaches.



Domestic violence as a central image for this chapter may initially appear problematic because so much of the violence represented occurs within a culturally oppositional context. However, I'll show that domestic violence is appropriate to use in this context because of the way that the authors allow violence in foreign places to bleed into domestic spaces. Domestic violence, even when it occurs in spaces that initially appear foreign, reflects a national anxiety about colonialism, entitlement, and vulnerability, as well as an admonition about the dangers of US hemispheric violence to the US national identity. In other words, when American tourists perform violence against foreigners in other countries, that violence rebounds into the domestic space of the American nation, both on white and ethnic Americans. Stephen Crane, María Cristina Mena, and Katherine Anne Porter's writings represent a shifting view of how foreign tourist violence disrupts and changes Mexican domestic spaces. The writers reveal a sense of entitlement to Mexican spaces, bodies, culture, and more as they create narratives that are ambivalent in their condemnation of those actions. Mena's narratives use domestic violence to allegorically critique US entitlement for an American audience. Assigning blame to the Mexican victim of the violence complicates all of the narratives' representations of violence. The transfer of violence from spaces within the nation, as have been present in texts by Anglo and Mexican writers in California and Texas, to spaces sovereign to another nation reveals an emerging hemispheric identity that US subjects seek to control and exclude from the American identity. Domestic violence in these narratives appears as both instigation of domestic violence in and on Mexico and as attempts to remove violence from the American home space, even though close readings of the narratives show that the stories cannot contain the violence the characters create

and that tourist violence impinges on the seemingly removed domestic space in the United States.

In addition to tourists seeking access to indigenous places or a thrill from the exotic, Mexico attracted political tourists who sought the leftist politics of the Revolution. Included among these is a young Katherine Anne Porter who made her first visit to Mexico around 1920 and continued to write about Mexico for national magazines until 1934. Mexico's allure for US tourists meant that at the same time the Mexican government worked toward an anti-imperial stance toward the US, its development of Mexican cultural attractions, according to Catherine Cocks, "compelled U.S.-owned businesses and U.S. tourists to respect Mexican sovereignty and national distinctiveness" even in the face of the unequal relationship between the nations (234). Most scholars acknowledge that tourism held benefits for both tourist and host: Dennis Merrill comments, "Mass tourism expanded and energized the everyday life of empire, produced new negotiating spaces for Mexican hosts, and modestly altered the hemispheric balance of power" (31). Because Crane, Mena, and Porter construct their short stories as a response to these pressures of tourism as an extension of empire's soft power, the individual tourists they represent are ambivalently allegorical for US incursions into Mexico, and the Mexican response to the US tourist's intentional or accidental violence.

The short stories in this chapter take place during the first three movements of US tourism in Mexico. The three authors published in the same venues, which reflects popular magazine culture of the time, and implicates the audience for the short stories in the domestic violence created by a voyeuristic, colonial tourist culture. *Century* published Stephen Crane's "A Man and Some Others" in 1897,<sup>1</sup> María Cristina Mena's "The

Education of Popo” in 1914, and Katherine Anne Porter’s “Virgin Violeta” in 1924. Even though the magazine changed editorial staff over the years, it was, according to Theodore Peterson, “In artistic and literary quality, in volume of respected advertising, in sales [...] the leading general monthly periodical [along with *Scribner’s* and *Harper’s*]. Their editors edited not for the great mass of population [...] but for the gentlefolk of means” (3). Peterson goes on to argue that these magazines “seem curiously remote from the dramatic changes taking place in American life” (3). However, I would argue that these magazines, through their focus on literature, travel, manners, etc., reveal attitudes about Americans’ place in the world.<sup>2</sup> Helen Delpar remarks that in the 1930s “a major element in the new American story about Mexico was that it was a place of great sensory power” (198) but, sensory details about Mexico appear much earlier with regard to Mexican people and customs and rendering these details imparts a sense of propriety over Mexico.

As magazines became cheaper to produce, the readership increased, advertising boomed, and while *Century* maintained its standard of literary value, other magazines also began publishing travel narratives and exotic pieces (Peterson 8-25). Patrick Dooly acknowledges the pressures writers felt to get their work published in these venues, noting that Crane’s story elicited criticism from the editor at the time for “profane dialogue in the story,” and from President Roosevelt for having the “Mexican Greaser” come out ahead of the “frontiersman” which was not “normal” (2). This comment reflects my earlier statement that Crane felt pressure to create within certain boundaries that would enable publication and readership. In her thorough discussion of Mena’s correspondence with the editors of *Century*, Melissa Marie González comments that Mena is both “cultural translator who corrects the ignorant assumptions of her editors”

and “an upper-middle class Mexican-American woman courting the high-brow Anglo audience of *The Century*” which means “Mena is aware that her audience wants to see quaint depictions of „Mexicanness“ and can pander expertly and subversively to the magazine’s exoticizing tastes” (135). As Mena defended her expertise on language and culture, she may have sacrificed some of her ability to write whatever she wanted, but she did maintain a subject position for her short stories. Finally, signaling a shift in what the readership expected in terms of exotic writing, Rob Johnson examines how Porter “defends herself against charges of pandering to the magazine-reading public’s love for romance set in „exotic“ places by replacing the term „foreign“ with „familiar“” (179). This sleight of hand that allows Porter to claim Mexico as “familiar” country leads to a sinister hypothesis of why her stories replaced Mena’s in the popular magazines, yet maintained similar plots (Johnson 109).

Stephen Crane’s “The Five White Mice” published in 1896 follows one evening’s adventures of the New York Kid in Mexico City. Stephen Crane’s background reflects the more traditional canonical American writer. Born in 1871 to old New England stock, Crane rejected Presbyterian religious teachings and worked as a journalist during the Spanish American War. Critics have cast his writing as both anti-imperial and strikingly racist toward native peoples.<sup>3</sup> Crane was one of the first prominent American writers to travel in and write about Mexico. Drewey Wayne Gunn characterizes Crane's writing as less interested in tourist attractions of Mexico and more interested in Mexico's "boatmen, vendors, musicians, and little parties of natives" so much so that he was struck by "the appalling poverty of the people, their fondness for strong drink, their cruelty to animals,

and their petty thievery and confidence games" (46). In other words, Crane's travel narratives and short stories stereotyped Mexicans for an American audience.

María Cristina Mena, born 1893 in Mexico City, published short stories in popular women's magazines from 1913-1931. Because of the impending Revolution in Mexico, she moved to New York City and began writing about American influences on her native Mexico. Her narratives have only recently begun to garner critical attention because they offer coded political commentaries on US empire as well as Mexican class disparities. This chapter examines two of Mena's stories—"The Gold Vanity Set" (1913) and "The Education of Popo" (1914)—in which privileged, blond American women travel to Mexico and inadvertently wreak havoc on domestic environments, causing domestic violence. Mena's short stories work to subvert some stereotypes about Mexicans through a critique of the American tourist. However, in these short stories, both Crane and Mena seem to find the irony in privileged American subjects traveling to Mexico—not with the goal of conquering but with the intention of experiencing the exotic country and its people—for the entertainment such travel provides. These American characters back away from the violence their presence creates, because even though their technology has brought the conflict in the story to a head, they cannot follow through with the action. The reticence to own the violence the American creates reflects the periodical audience that wants to experience the exotic culture but not realize how American colonialism has affected the exotic culture. The crucial revealing difference between the stories is that Crane's American tourist realizes the ambivalence he feels when he acknowledges equality with the Mexican subjects, but Mena's American tourists continue to see the Mexican, whether indigenous or elite, as in need of "help."

Katherine Anne Porter, better known for her stories about Texas and the Southern United States, marks the third wave of tourism in Mexico, as she originally went to Mexico in the early 1920s as part of her political leftist beliefs. She returned to Mexico regularly and lived in the country for some time. Consequently, she did not see herself as a tourist; rather she believed that Mexico had become her “familiar country,” and as she wrote stories about Mexico, she usurped Mena’s place in the women’s magazines. This chapter examines two short stories—“Virgin Violeta” (1924) and “That Tree” (1934)—to show how representations of whiteness enact domestic violence on Mexican people and spaces even as they claim sympathy to those places. Porter’s tourists feel like they belong in Mexico and articulate that they have become experts on Mexican ways and culture, yet their very presence destabilizes Mexican domestic space in problematic ways.

Furthermore, Porter’s writings, as glimpses into Mexican culture for an American audience also do violence on Mexican bodies by privileging an American subjectivity that values Mexican peoples only when they are safely away in Mexico and not already within the national body politic.

Stephen Crane’s “The Five White Mice” is deeply ambivalent about the US incursion into Mexico. In this short story, the protagonist feels entitled to Mexican spaces, but at the end of the story, he experiences a kind of equality that renders him conflicted about the role of Americans in Mexico. After a night of gambling, the New York Kid joins his friends, the Frisco Kid and Benson, who are staggeringly drunk. Helping them home, the New York Kid finds himself in the middle of a standoff with three Mexicans, who Benson has offended. His fear is real, and as he imagines how his family will react to hearing about his death, the Kid shakily draws his gun. At the sight of

the gun, the Mexicans (who only have knives) leap back and realize the futility of the fight. The Kid becomes angry because he has discovered that the Mexicans are just like him—afraid of the confrontation and afraid of death. The last line of the story is particularly telling; it reads, “Nothing had happened” (417). The anti-climax symbolizes the crises of masculinity as the frontier closed and imperial interests abroad expanded.<sup>4</sup>

For Crane’s audience, reading about travel in Mexico was a way of extending the frontier and the exotic unknown. The reader and the protagonist are linked in their literary and fantastical assumptions about Mexico, so that when violence enters the narrative, it contributes to a domestic awareness of family and audience, whose vulnerabilities are the same. The confrontation also debunks the fantasy the New York Kid imagines about Mexico: “Until his arrival in Mexico City, he knows only what he has read in dime novels, but his quick-draw confrontation with three Mexicans on a street in the capital helps him get beyond the literary conventions he is reenacting” (Robertson 248). For the New York Kid, the experience of moving from the imaginary Mexico of bullfights, circuses, drinking, and gambling to the reality of Mexican people’s equality is tantamount to a violent dislodging of the emotional investment in the tourist image. Realizing that foreign violence in Mexico has domestic ramifications renders the New York Kid afraid and shaky. In this instance, foreign violence encompasses the very presence of the New York Kid in Mexican public spaces, his gun that he threatens the Mexican men with, and the money he brings with him to live the life of leisure and gambling that he has chosen. David Halliburton points out that “The size of the Kid’s bet implies a significant financial risk until we learn that his father is a financier and a millionaire. Money, then, is no serious thing. What is serious is the capacity to act, as an

individual, in a crisis brought on, in particular circumstances, by chance” (257). While the size of the gambling bet is not significant, the wager the Kid makes with their lives seems to be, until he realizes that the Mexicans are like him, afraid and vulnerable to violence in domestic spaces. The New York Kid is not afraid of his actions until he realizes how they translate into his family’s domestic space, as he imagines his family weeping around the hearth for his untimely death.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the presence of foreign money and an initially blasé attitude toward violence and death leads to a domestic crisis for the Mexicans and the New York Kid. This type of domestic violence also implicates the audience through the setting flashback into the New York Kid’s family home, a supposedly safe place from which to consume this kind of fiction is suddenly rendered vulnerable as well.

The image of Mexico as a fundamentally sensory place and American’s right to ownership in Mexico conflict with the Kid’s anger at the end of the story as he reflects on the evening’s events. Much of the travel narration about Mexico in the early twentieth century was meant to give Americans at home a sense of what the country was really like, especially since the US had just acquired half of Mexico’s land. Crane’s travel commentary (from which short stories like “The Five White Mice” grew) discusses in sensory detail the act of drinking in Mexico:

The native can get howling full for anything from twelve cents to twenty cents. Twelve cents is the equivalent in American coinage of about six cents. Many men of celebrated thirsts in New York would consider this a profoundly ideal condition. However, six cents represents something to the Indian. Unless there are some Americans around to be robbed, he is obliged to rustle very savagely for his



pulque money. When he gets it he is happy and the straight line he makes for one of the flaming shops has never been outdone by any metropolitan iceman that drinks [...] The Indian, in his dusty cotton shirt and trousers, his tattered sombrero, his flapping sandals, his stolid dark face, is of the same type in this regard that is familiar to every land, the same prisoner, the same victim. (62)

A few things become obvious in this section. Crane draws distinctions between “good” Americans who visit Mexico and might be robbed for pulque money and “bad” Americans who drink their wages away, like the Indian. He also seems oblivious to the way that his short story establishes drunkenness on the part of the Americans as the catalyst for the fight in the first place.<sup>6</sup> Americans in Mexico, consuming Mexican beverages, start a standoff with elite Mexicans in the streets. This scene fits into a long history of imperial consumption. As Jeffrey Pilcher points out, “Through food and drink, tourists from the United States have consumed their Mexican neighbors; alternately dominating, transforming, excluding, and embracing them according to an Orientalist logic that evolves with social relations in both countries” (221).

In “The Five White Mice” the opening scene of gambling and drinking establishes the sense of entitlement the American subjects feel. They wager anything they can think of: dinner, money in their pockets, cigarettes, wine for dinner, drinks for the crowd, until they are out of ideas and must wager a trip to the circus (404). The reliance on public entertainments from the bar to the circus to the street reflects a hedonistic desire to participate in tourist events that encroach on Mexicans’ private spaces. The use of public entertainments in the story, as Bradley Edwards notes, reflects how tourism encourages mass spectacle at the expense of the domestic population (18). Here too, the very

presence of foreign tourists enacts a kind of domestic violence by making the native population into objects for entertainment and establishing an expectation of forced servitude. The Kid's bet takes the group out of the ex-patriot enclave into the streets of Mexico City, which they feel entitled to as well. Juan Alonzo observes, "Crane presents the Americans' drunkenness as leading them to act recklessly" (386). As a direct outgrowth of their sense of entitlement, the ensuing conflict is ambivalent and diminishes the Anglos' sense of self rather than inflating it. The New York Kid's sense of place and ownership is destabilized by his night out in the Mexico City streets. He feels entitled to Mexico as an American and as a tourist, yet as the extent of his own presence and violence dawns on him, he comes to realize his own participation in hemispheric violence against Mexico. The sober but gambling New York Kid realizes that the gamble he has taken with his ability to control Mexicans' behavior frightens him and he feels the colonialist impulse and its impotence.

The bravado with which Crane writes about Americans in Mexico is evident in his other stories and journalistic sketches about Mexico. In one sketch, an archeologist and capitalist meet on a train going to Mexico where they realize that neither speaks Spanish nor has friends in Mexico: "These mutual acknowledgements riveted the two men together. In this invasion, which they were both facing the unknown, an acquaintance was a prize" (43). It is important that the characters here are an archeologist—one who will excavate Mexican Indigenous artifacts and export them as museum pieces (or destroy the infrastructure all together)—and a capitalist—one who will start a long tradition of exploiting Mexican labor for US profit. As they travel further into Mexico, Crane depicts the train as it "conquered more and more miles towards its

sunny destination” (47). “Conquered” taken with “invasion” from the previous quote establishes not only a sense of entitlement toward Mexico but lends a colonialist bent to the narratives. The adventure these tourists seek comes from several fronts, not the least of which is the ability to see their presence as an invasion and profiteering speculation. However, as early tourism developed, it was not without its dangers: “Visitors complained of the unsatisfactory accommodations in Mexico City, and travel often proved harrowing: foreign visitors were commonly robbed by border bandits while traversing roads by coach and train, especially in northern Mexico” (Berger and Wood 7). Despite these dangerous possibilities, Crane, and his characters, penetrated the interior of Mexico where they proceed to send back dispatches on their experiences to the domestic readership in New England.

Even as the New York Kid took it as his right to be in Mexican spaces at all hours, he had to realize his vulnerability. Yet, it’s also important to comment that while Americans might have been victims of robbery, they still carried a threat of weaponry and imperialism that their positions as white tourists afforded them.<sup>7</sup> In the instance of the standoff, the New York Kid and his friends not only present the threat of economic and imperial violence the US represents for Mexico, but they also here represent the threat of actual physical violence on Mexican bodies. Crane describes the scene through much posturing, emphasizing how the men’s bodies occupy the space. In fact, the whole reason for the standoff is that Benson has invaded a Mexican’s space by bumping him in the street and then being too drunk and entitled to apologize. Therefore, in the standoff, the Mexicans are defending their rights to physical, bodily space as well at the more metaphorical public space of their own country. As the New York Kid realizes how the

Mexicans see the standoff, his dawning realization of his own violence is what makes “The Five White Mice” so compelling in its ambivalence.

In a return to the domestic, the Kid knows that his own place in Mexico must encroach on the domestic space of his home because the men he encounters are like him. Andrea Boardman, writing about the soldier-tourists remarks, “American soldiers, particularly the more well-connected officers, found the harsher edges of the tourist gaze softened by serendipitous encounters when they met Mexicans with whom they had some shared experience that bridged their differences” (28). Their presence is necessarily violent because the recognition they realize does not extend to the reading audience. Experience is a metaphorical mirror in “The Five White Mice.” When the three Mexican men stand off with the Kid and his friends, their poses mirror each other with significant variation. The drunken Benson can barely stand, yet makes a pair to pair match with one of the Mexicans. The Kid notices how the man facing him “cut a fine and terrible figure” (413). The figure makes the Kid irrationally angry, as he cannot see the man facing him as beneath him. Instead, he must recognize the “nobility” of the Spanish blood that the men contain, and via this blood, the Kid sees that the Mexican men are equals to the American tourists in their capacity for fear and honor. Juan Alonzo reads this scene as demonstrating “Crane’s attraction to the codes of honor and ritualistic behavior which he sees in the Mexican’s masculinity” (385). In holding up this mirror, Crane questions the extent and virility of the American hero’s masculinity. Like Mena will also, Crane’s use of the mirror allows questions about the international and domestic implications of misinterpretation of the Other. Alonzo goes on to contend, “Crane is less concerned with deriding the Mexican than with deflating the myth of the Western hero, which he

achieves through an unprejudiced depiction of Mexican characters” (380). Crane causes his audience to call into question the larger dime story view of the West, the romance of the frontier, the masculine impulses of danger and violence; this is evident in some of Crane’s Western stories, but is even more striking here when the Other is a foreign national who cannot be absorbed into Manifest Destiny or the national body politic. Impotence in empire marks a theme in this story as neither the hero nor the villain can defeat the other—the mirror that shows their humanity.

The New York Kid psychologically destabilizes the narrative. His mind takes him out of the moment of the stand off to his family in New England. This moment of vulnerability projects the violence of imperialism into the domestic national sphere as he imagines his family’s reaction to his impending death. No one is free from the implications of empire. The tourist is not safe, and neither is his family.<sup>8</sup> Crane’s rendering of the Mexicans allows the Kid to see how his own presence in Mexico is violent and how his continued presence threatens the domestic space of his home by inviting that violence back into his nation. Raymond Paredes reads Crane’s Mexicans as representations of “shameful cowardice” (34) and suggests that all of Crane’s portrayals of Mexicans are racist, but in this instance there is ambivalence in how the New York Kid sees the Mexican.<sup>9</sup> He simultaneously recognizes that they are both human and have fear and nobility, but he also in his fury at being misled by the other men’s fear expresses his desire to “take the serape of the grandee and swaddle him in it” (416). Swaddling is for babies, and while this statement might point to support for Paredes’s reading, I argue that it reveals the furious impotence of the New York Kid. He wants to infantilize the Mexican but even though he has drawn his weapon, the Mexican maintains a position

using “cynical bravado” and “smiling mockery” that try as he might the Kid cannot erase. The group standoff bequeaths power to the Mexicans even as it stops short of admonishing the Kid for his foolish desire to fight. The Kid’s realization makes this story ambivalent in that it is unwilling to condemn the American policies that encourage tourism and exploitation but the narrative recognizes problems within the framework of tourism, recklessness, and violence. In the story’s ambivalence, it maintains one form of domestic violence—the economic colonization/modernization of Mexico—but keeps at bay another form—the physical manifestation of domestic violence on Mexican bodies during the standoff.

María Cristina Mena’s short stories are necessarily ambivalent because she is writing for an American audience about her native Mexico. This ambivalence is easy to mistake for lack of bravery, a la Raymund Paredes, but I believe that her ambivalence stems from her privileged position as a woman who was able to escape the Revolution as part of an elite family. She could see the ways that the Mexican Revolution was a form of domestic violence and she could also see how the United States’ participation in Mexican affairs also led to more domestic violence within Mexico. These observations appear in her short stories “The Gold Vanity Set” and “The Education of Popo” written in 1913-14 and published in *American Magazine* and *Century* respectively. The first story features a stand off between Petra, a Mexican Indian waitress, and Miss Young, a blond American tourist visiting the hacienda owner. Miss Young carries a camera and guidebook—symbols of the voyeuristic tourist. She wants to take Petra’s picture, but Petra cowers when faced with the camera and cannot allow this invasion of her privacy.<sup>10</sup> In her haste to depart, Miss Young inadvertently leaves her gold vanity set (containing a mirror,

powder, and rouge) in the cantina where Petra finds it. Petra, enthralled by the mirror and her skin with powder on it, believes the vanity set to be a kind of miracle. She offers it to the Virgin in hopes that the Virgin will use it to ensure that her husband will refrain from drinking and beating her. Meanwhile, Miss Young wants her set back and is convinced someone has stolen it for the gold's value. When she sees the set adorning the Virgin, she misreads the scene by condescending Petra, but she chooses to leave the symbol (of wealth, opportunity, change, modernity, femininity, etc.) at the altar. The important aspects of this story are how the mirror/camera provides a lens for representation of domestic violence, Mexico as a place for incursion and violence, and then linking these two aspects to show how tourist violence acts on Mexican bodies.

The camera that Miss Young brings, along with the vanity set and guidebook, is the catalyst for the instance of domestic violence enacted on Petra. Miss Young exclaims, upon seeing Petra, "I positively must have her picture!" to which the rich patron showing her around Mexico replies, "Of course—at your disposition" (3). Yet, Petra "rebelled with the dumb obstinacy of the Indian, even to weeping and sitting on the floor. Manuelo [her husband], scandalized at such contumacy before the *Patrón*, pulled her to her feet and gave her a push which sent her against the wall. A shiver and murmur passed through the American ranks" (4). This passage reveals that Miss Young is not the only one who feels entitled to Mexican bodies; Mena also comments on a peonage system that renders people like Petra and Manuelo servants to people like Don Ramón. However, her family is complicit in being elite Mexicans who can afford to send their children to the United States in the face of danger and who continue to as Leticia Garza-Falcón says, "sell Mexico to the United States" (138). Additionally, the pointing of the camera frightens

Petra, and the language is not unlike that of Miss Young aiming a gun at Petra. Miss Young's seemingly innocent demand for a picture of Petra leads to a scene of domestic violence that the American women immediately seek to distance themselves from. When Petra refuses to allow the photograph, Manuelo, who is drunk and embarrassed that she is incompliant in front of the Don, throws Petra across the room. The tourists leave hastily, not wanting to acknowledge or own the violence enacted on their behalf. Instead, they attempt to blame Manuelo's drinking for his violence, which fits into a temperance paradigm suitable for American women audiences. The greater irony is that in the magazine version of the story, the page that this exchange occurs on is followed by a full color illustration of Petra in Indian costuming, with makeup and flowers adorning her hair. Charlotte Rich argues that the image provides readers "with the photographic representation of Petra that she denies the American tourist in the story" (207) and that it reveals how Mena's work within the magazine was beyond her control. I agree with Rich's argument and would add that the drawing of Petra accompanying the story underscores the sense of entitlement Americans (not only tourists) felt toward Mexican bodies and spaces following the US-Mexico war and during the Revolution as a matter of vogue and curiosity. There is a kind of domestic violence enacted by the image, when the text so clearly shows Petra's fear and reluctance to pose, and the image shows a gaily-adorned figure flirting with the camera. The magazine's editors and audience seem to not recognize the cognitive dissonance radiating from this picture and its entitlement to change Petra's characterization at will. Blaming domestic violence on the class of peons is sneaky, because the truth is that Petra's husband is worried about what the Patrón will do to him if his wife does not comply, and the Don, who is guiding the American women,



worries what they think of his inability to control the Indian servants. The actual cause for violence in the story, then, is American's insistence on entitlement to Mexican bodies. The entitlement goes beyond the characters to implicate the audience, whose need for exotic fiction includes the desire to see Petra in an illustration, rendering violence at home and abroad.

The exploitation of the Indian in economic and domestic violence is seen as both natural and unavoidable. Yet, Mena's critique of the peonage system foreshadows some of the arguments Jose Vasconcelos makes in his 1925 *La Raza Cosmica*. Don Ramón tells Miss Young, "We love them [the Indians]. They are our blood. With their passion, their melancholy, their music, and their superstition they have passed without transition from the feudalism of the Aztecs into the world of today" (10). Certainly, as Melissa Marie González comments, this passage seems condescending today, but she argues, "in 1913 it does anticipate the championing of the indigenous Mexican and the valorization of indigenous mythology" (127). Vasconcelos saw the Mexican Revolution as a possibility for the Cosmic Race to come into being. As "Ethnic barriers lose their force [...] this new race, in which all the present races will become diffused and eventually disappear, and which will be gifted with the power of creative fantasy over reason" (Jaen x), and the result is a revitalized mestizaje, the comment Don Ramón innocently makes excuses domestic violence against Indians. Unfortunately, he simultaneously suggests that love leads him to enslaving Indians but assures himself that, as the races mix, the Indian will hold an exalted place in Heaven. However, this championing may contribute to further exploitation of the indigenous population of Mexico. In an article that connects Mena's short stories to a collection of photography, Margaret Toth examines photographs

of Yaqui Indians by a photographer known only as W. Roberts. She makes a persuasive argument for the ways that the photographs assist an imperialist project to assimilate and exploit Indian labor in Northern Mexico and the Southwestern United States. The 1908-09 collection contains jarringly disquieting images including studio portraits, pictures of executions, and candid photos of daily family life. Toth points out that some of the photos do show the subject's resistance, and she argues that "Mena provides a narrative for such voiceless images, articulating the realities of living under US imperialism, especially its ramifications for the daily physical lives of Mexico's inhabitants" (108). Mena does present US imperialism as complicit in the domestic violence against Mexico's indigenous population, but she also directs critique against the peonage system that allows Mexican elites to exploit the Indians as well.

As in Crane's story where the mirror image of the Mexicans to the Americans sparks a moment of recognition, mirroring is essential to Mena's narrative of subverting Anglo supremacy. The gold vanity set contains a mirror. As Petra gazes at herself, she is surprised by how little color there is in her cheeks and how large her eyes are. She adds the rouge to make herself more like Miss Young and powders her hands to approximate the whiteness of the foreign visitors. Her effort to mirror herself as the foreign again subverts the perspective of the Anglo reader. Petra is both the Other and the Familiar. She conflates the mirror with mystical power and gives it to the Virgin. Amy Doherty points out that the mirror in Mena's texts "depicts the problems which occur internationally and domestically because of misinterpretation" (xlvi-xlvii). Miss Young cannot see the importance of the milagro—she questions how such a trinket could bring temperance to Petra's husband, and she continues to view Mexico and Petra as "picturesque" akin to

running “into the twelfth or some other old century one day out from Austin” (10). She seems to have not learned anything, but the reader, by virtue of seeing things through Petra’s eyes, has the opportunity to see how Anglo supremacy falls short when faced with a complex religious and social identity separate from and incomprehensible to the Anglo. The realization does not foster ideas of equality per se, but it does challenge the inferiority of Mexican and Mexican American subjects.

Miss Young’s comments squarely place her entitlement toward Mexican spaces as an example of viewing Mexico as a place for violent incursion. Her attitude reflects that of other Americans at the time. According to Douglas Monroy, “Mexico appeared to be not only the land of opportunity to big-time capitalists, but to Americans of the more sundry sort. By 1910 more than forty thousand lived in the countryside and cities and towns of Mexico. Many of these people availed themselves of the advantageous land prices and cheap and powerless labor force that the dictatorship of Porfirio provided” (119). While many of these people left Mexico when the Revolution began, their influence had an impact on the Mexican economy and people. Of course, it was not only Americans who had an interest in exploiting Mexico, as Mena demonstrates. Garza-Falcón observes that Mena presents Mexican families and elites as all too willing to “sell Mexico to the United States” through business deals and importation of American goods and ideas (138). Because Mena publishes her stories during the Revolution, a time of class violence within Mexico and a period of continued interference by US policy, she must respond to the violent foreign incursions within Mexico, but she subtly represents these moments for her American audience. She cannot outwardly condemn and be heard (like the women

talking to Bancroft), but she can subvert a racist narrative by using Spanish and critiquing participation in domestic violence and imperialism.

In a slyly comedic moment of exposing entitlement, Mena shows Miss Young misinterpreting a standard Spanish greeting. Don Ramón tells her “The house is yours” (how Mena has translated *Mi casa, su casa* for her American reading public) but Miss Young tells her entourage, “This is my house—and I invite you all in” (3). The narrator of the story finds it amusing that the entire group, who are supposedly being led by Don Ramón, instead takes its orders from Miss Young. Once inside the tavern, she does act as if she owns the place. After demanding a picture and witnessing Manuelo beating Petra, she and the other women hasten away in an attempt to distance themselves from the domestic violence. Yet, later, she is perfectly willing to demand that Don Ramón interrogate the customers and proprietors of the restaurant to determine who has “stolen” her gold vanity set, even though she left it behind. Again though, Miss Young shrinks from the violence performed at her urging. When she hears Petra crying violently as the Don questions her, Miss Young “disturbed by visions of medieval torture, ran in to protest against further inhumanity in her name” (9). Her sense of entitlement serves to make her an ambivalent character—she is both colonial benevolence and menace. As Rich points out, “Though the Mexican girl reveres this „modern“ American woman, Mena again employs dramatic irony to undermine her respect, characterizing the aptly-named and immature Miss “Young” as self-oriented, superficial, and disrespectful of the native culture she has come to Mexico to observe” (208). She seems too superficial to be dangerous, but her attitudes compounded with the number of people she will tell her stories to upon her return to the US serve to make her a problematic diplomat.

There is a kind of psychological violence done to Petra when she puts on Miss Young's make up. She sees herself for the first time in the mirror, yet what it reflects is not good enough and Petra experiments with the powder and rouge. Originally, Miss Young thinks that "her complexion makes a stunning blend with my rouge" (8). When Don Ramón has elicited a confession from Petra, "She turned pale—so pale that the rouge stood out in islands streaked with rivercourses of tears, and Miss Young looked away with a shuddering prayer that she might never turn pale except in the privacy of her chamber" (10). Mena engages a fascinating conversation about whiteness, make up, privacy, and prayer. As a blond, Miss Young's skin is presumed pale, yet she must use the powder and rouge to correct the color of her own paleness, suggesting that already the beauty standard for women is unattainable. Petra's prayer with the vanity set is that Manuelo will stop beating her, but Miss Young's prayer is that she can avoid surprises except in her own chamber. Therefore, even though the domestic violence is intimate, for Petra it occurs in public, whether it is Manuelo beating her or the Don questioning her, for Miss Young, privacy is paramount. Miss Young's presence in Mexico invades the space with American ideals, and while the outcome seems positive for Petra—her husband promises to quit drinking and beating her—the cost has been her realization that she cannot live up to an American standard of beauty and wealth.

Furthermore, Miss Young's declaration that she is delighted to be able to see the twelfth century only "one day out from Austin" (10) foreshadows the sense of entitlement American tourists (and the Mexican government) enact on indigenous peoples. In a revelation of deep irony, Christina Bueno discusses how Indian ruins became a bedrock of tourism for Mexico beginning in 1910. The Díaz regime reconstructed Teotihuacán as

an archeological site and showpiece for the Mexican centennial celebration. Amidst the celebration was the ironic reality that “this was also a fiercely anti-Indian regime, one that saw contemporary Indians as degenerate; that stripped them of their land on a scale unseen before; that hunted down the Yaqui and Maya” (55). Mena’s writing then provides a gentle poking fun at US tourists but also holds Mexican officials responsible for their own treatment of the natives.<sup>11</sup> Mena stops short of blaming Americans or Mexicans entirely, because while Miss Young keeps enacting violence and then shrinking back from what she has created, she does leave the gold vanity set in Mexico as an offering for the Virgin. She also does not take anything back with her, and this point is vitally important. She is unable to snap a photograph of Petra and she does not stake a claim to any relics that might have belonged to the indigenous population, unlike many American and European tourists of the time. Bueno points out that while it’s difficult to gauge exactly how many artifacts were stolen from archeological sites at the time, American sightseers, Spanish antiquarians, and Mexican profiteers all acquired artifacts for their own personal gain (60). Ransacking indigenous ruins was profitable, but notably, Miss Young and company do not participate in this kind of desecration and violence. In light of this behavior, Miss Young’s naiveté and unthinking comments rife with mistranslation seem to be a product of misunderstanding and misguided stereotyping.

Mena reveals her ambivalence toward American tourists and American participation in exploitation of Mexican bodies and spaces. As M.M. González points out, “Mena’s negative voice accuses Anglos of misreading Mexican women but unconsciously ends by conveying her own participation in the perpetuation of Mexican

stereotypes” (137). I agree that Mena holds Anglos responsible for some of the violence done to Mexican women, but rather than Mena’s own participation, I would argue that she is also critiquing the Mexican participation in domestic violence. This is essential to understanding how far from lacking bravery, as Paredes accuses her of, Mena willingly confronts American and Mexican forms of violence in the tradition of the women interviewed for the Bancroft project and foreshadowing women writers such as Lucha Corpi and Demetria Martínez who will simultaneously critique their communities as well as outside forms of violence against women. Like Crane, she spells out the ambivalence for her audience, giving them some credit to see how domestic violence transcends national boundaries, yet while Crane stops short of exposing actual physical violence and transporting it into American home spaces, Mena does not cower from implicating the American reader in physical domestic violence as well as economic and colonial violence.

Women tourists were less common at the turn of the century than they were after World War I. While men experienced tourism as an extension of masculinity and Manifest Destiny at the turn of the century, objectifying Mexican women as a way of joining what Dennis Merrill describes as “competing yet complementary colonizing impulses, the drive to acquire and possess and the irrepressible urge to suppress „barbaric“ native practices” (44), women tourists supposedly embraced a more internationalist impulse. However, Mena flips this benevolent American woman tourist stereotype head over heels in her short stories. Among the many ways that Mena subverts expectations for representations of Mexico, Kyla Schuller points out one way: “Mena interrogated the beauty industry as a potent agent of neocolonialism that negatively

impacts her characters' self-conception, social relations and economic independence at a time when U.S. companies gained control over the most important sectors of the Mexican economy" (83). Certainly, Miss Young desires to acquire and possess the image of Petra as well as to suppress the barbaric domestic violence she witnesses; her gold vanity set becomes a symbol of neocolonialism, yet is repurposed by Petra as a miracle that subverts the foreign incursion and foreign beliefs into Mexico and the "primitive." Mena extends this condemnation of blond American women tourists in "The Education of Popo" a short story published in *Century Magazine* in 1914.

Mena's "The Education of Popo" illustrates a different kind of domestic violence—one that feminizes Mexican men through their relationships with Anglo women and on that shows how American tourists, in ridiculing Mexican customs, contribute to domestic violence. In the story, Alicia Cherry and her mother and father travel from the United States to visit Governor Fernando Arriola and his family in Mexico. Ostensibly, the trip is to further business connections the father wishes to make in Mexico, but the story focuses on Miss Cherry's boredom and flirtation with the fourteen year old son Próspero (Popo). The father's business in Mexico is important to consider because this story takes place during the Revolution when American speculators were simultaneously trying to protect and expand their investments in Mexico and deeply worried that the Revolution would lead to a hostile (functioning) government right across the border. According to Monroy, "American corporations, consortiums, and individuals owned over one hundred million acres [...] such amounted to more than 22 percent of Mexico's land surface [...] in 1912 and 1913 as the violence and chaos of revolution in Mexico escalated, many of the more apprehensive American small capitalists bailed out



and offered their properties for sale at bargain prices” (119). When other Americans bought those properties, their economic optimism was misplaced and the revolution cost them the land. Mr. Cherry would be one of the speculative risk-takers. Popo’s education then into US ways is not only about love, romance, and relationships but also about economic and diplomatic hard power. The violence that occurs within the home reflects the larger meddling by the US government into the internal affairs in Mexico.<sup>12</sup>

As the Arriola family’s domestic space opens to the Cherrys, there are several indications of the sense of entitlement the Americans feel to Mexican homes, hospitality, and people. At a dance, Alicia, bucking Mexican tradition, leads Popo through the crowded areas and dance floor to show, in her word, “the inhabitants how such things were managed in America—beg pardon, the United States” (50).<sup>13</sup> Not only does Alicia reveal a spoiled entitlement here she also claims hemispheric privilege through the use of “American.” Her statement reveals a hemispheric sensibility, but one that she embraces reluctantly.<sup>14</sup> She corrects herself, but it is a tacked on, self-conscious correction that seems only to placate the Mexican population she has already offended by insisting on her own customs in courtship over their own. Later, mother and daughter quarrel over their assistance in the advancement of the father’s schemes, the daughter’s use of her maiden name, and the very non-Catholic divorce she has just acquired from her husband. After leading Popo on, Alicia decides to return to her husband but Popo has run away, and she has a realization of the violence she may have done when she imagines “a slender boy self-slain among the ferns where he had received caresses and whispers of love from a goddess of light fancy and lighter faith” (59). Even though this is Alicia’s imagination, the narrator inserts a sarcastic note here to indicate that for all her sense of entitlement, to

men, music, and money. The language Alicia uses to describe Mexico and Popo suggests “the essentialist ideas about Mexican culture that many readers of *Century* magazine likely held in the early twentieth century, the attitudes of an outsider who regards Mexico as an exotic, slightly dangerous commodity to be consumed with abandon or with caution” (Rich 212). Alicia fancies herself an Aphrodite, but in fact, she has so little substance that she deceives all around her with a careless violence.

Alicia’s treatment of her mother scandalizes the narrator, her treatment of Popo scandalizes her husband, and the very fact that she has a husband scandalizes and shames Popo. She, however, is oblivious to her affect on others, commenting, “it seems that I’m the first blonde with the slightest claim to respectability that ever invaded this part of Mexico” (59). Putting aside the invasion aspect of this statement, her claim to whiteness through blonde hair is laughable in that she admits later to it being a “mouse drab” that she’s had to “touch up” (62).<sup>15</sup> As a masked invader, Alicia is far from respectable. She leads Popo on and then abandons him when her ex-husband appears. Her (and her father’s actions) are all to advance their own causes in Mexico at the expense of the Mexican population. Blonde dye cannot hide the darker aspects of Alicia’s soul when Popo declares her “a name which ought not be applied to any lady in any language” (61). He had thought of her as a saint, but upon her dismissal he reacts violently as well. She still believes that she has helped him by giving him an education of sorts, even if it is a violent dislodging of his cultural mores. Edward Simmen articulates this point particularly well by declaring that Mena illustrates how “for years, Americans have been invading Mexico with determined and relentless constancy [...] brought or sent attitudes, technology, products, and ideas” yet he remarks that most of these invasions have been

“warmly received” and “taken root in the country and changed it” (151). I argue that Mena’s voice in these texts reveals the problems with these tourist invasions and am more inclined to view the incursion as Garza-Falcón does in that “However eager the Arriolas may have been to import American culture through its products, there remain an opposition and resistance to any altering of the basic rules of courtship and ancient Mexican traditions” (144). The women tourists who break Mexican customs without regard for the violent implications of their actions create domestic violence within the country. Alicia claims to take responsibility for the violent removal of innocence, but she actually exonerates herself with the comfortable conclusion that she’s done Popo a favor of an education for his future in the United States.

Naming is essential to consider in both of these stories. In “The Gold Vanity Set,” Miss Young is set in opposition to Petra in almost every possible way. While their physical descriptions reflect this overtly, their names are a subtle reminder of the differences, too. Petra is the name of the ancient city in Jordan (which is named for the “old stone” from the Greek root), which further underscores Miss Young’s comment that she is visiting an old century. Miss Young hails from Texas and the United States, a relatively young incarnation of a country and people. She also embraces new technologies, ideas about women, and use of cosmetics, in keeping with her name. In “The Education of Popo,” Mena engages even more interesting global identities to suggest the differences between characters. Popo, short for Próspero, hearkens to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as well as the more literal meaning, to prosper. It is ironic to suggest that Popo prospers through the education Miss Cherry gives him, yet Mena others Prospero by revealing his vulnerabilities but maintaining a strong sense of pride for the

character. As a play that has been modernly regarded as postcolonial, *The Tempest* is an appropriate moment of intertextuality for Mena to evoke and situates the story in the context of Caribbean post-colonial studies. Furthermore, Winterbottom also closely resembles Winterbourne, the hero of Henry James's 1878 *Daisy Miller*. As Winterbourne courts the flirtatious Daisy, her reputation leads him to reject her. Winterbottom married his flirtatious Alicia, and their later divorce seems based on her lack of interest in being settled; however, when she threatens to kiss Popo, as part of his education, Winterbottom hopes that his wife will return to him unsullied. The only reason she does not kiss Popo is because Popo rejects *her*! Finally, Alicia Cherry's name is significant in that the slang usage of Cherry as a figurative equivalent for virginity was already in the lexicon by the time Mena wrote "The Education of Popo" (Oxford English Dictionary Online 5.c.). Furthermore, Cherry could refer to lips (OED 5.a). Both of these meanings enhance the argument that Alicia was taking advantage of Popo by offering her lips and threatening his virginity.

Both of Mena's stories show how American women tourists impart violence on Mexican bodies and how the women themselves shrink from the violence they inspire—even as they continue to create it. The sentence Alicia utters about being the first blonde to have invaded is also a sexual threat. The masculine language she uses codes the fact that the part of Mexico she has invaded is not a region, but a young boy's mind and body. Mena makes a point here that while men can be aggressive tourists, American women have the potential to be as violating as men. Both Miss Cherry and Miss Young leave Mexico with a sense of having saved Popo and Petra from their social conditions and restrictions. However, their attitudes play into the argument Delpar advances to show that

the vogue of Mexico related more to the Mexican population in the Mexico at the expense of the Mexican population in the US.<sup>16</sup> The reason for this, she notes, was that most of the knowledge about Mexicans for East Coast Americans came from “American political pilgrims who visited Mexico and the activities of Mexican cultural émigrés” (17). However, Delpar’s discussion mentions Mena (and Mena falls into the latter category), but Delpar glosses Mena’s most important contributions to understanding and debunking a white savior myth about Mexico. The white savior myth, so evident in the historical romances of Ruiz de Burton and Atherton, suggests that the Mexican protagonist depends on an Anglo savior to protect him or her from the inherent cultural ills of Mexican society. Even unwitting violence on Mexican bodies, when it’s excused by a blatant white savior myth, reveals how American tourists inflicted domestic violence on the population of Mexico regardless of class status, race, or gender.

As the Revolutionary violence faded, the Mexican government came to promote tourism, and American travelers embraced the ability to explore Mexico. Advancing tourism was a double-edged sword for Mexico as it increased revenues but left Mexican people and artifacts at the mercy of American dollars and attitudes. As tourism to Mexico increased in the 1920s and 1930s, US citizens also explored parts of the US, increasingly including California and the interpretation of Old Spain.<sup>17</sup> Efforts to increase tourism opportunities in the Rio Grande Valley fell short, however, when Valley communities did not cooperate with each other to promote the region. Robin Robinson describes that the lack of chamber of commerce cooperation led to “outsiders”—including the railroads and coastal developers—promoting the Valley for tourism (211-13). In contrast to this reticence to developing a tourist industry in the Valley, Mexico’s tourism bureau

“initiated a program with the slogan „Come to Mexico” and offered “special rail rates,” “special immigration exceptions,” and “ancient ruins of the Aztecs and colonial Spain” to the US tourist (213). This eagerness for tourist dollars helps explain why East Coast Americans knew more about Mexicans in Mexico than in the US. Travel to Mexico—especially as seen in Miss Young who comes from Austin—that bypasses the Valley reinforces the idea of Mexico as a place for foreign incursions into domestic spaces.

Beyond the individual tourist was a national model for advancement of diplomacy and cooperation between the formerly warring nations. Mena’s “The Education of Popo” predates the Good Neighbor Policy that, in part, promoted tourism as a way of increasing peace and understanding between the two nations. The National Tourism Commission’s collection of essays encouraged US travel to Mexico because Mexico would get economic benefits and Americans would “find a hospitable and welcoming people” (Berger 115). The Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America (1925) organized tours and seminars on Mexico for American business leaders, professors, doctors, and other intellectuals in hopes that they would take what they learned about Mexico back to their communities (115). While these examples show that there were good intentions toward building relationships between the two countries, there was nevertheless an exploitative undertaking that required that Americans always be the tourists and never welcomed Mexicans into the US as intellectual equals. Mena, as an elite exile, eerily foreshadows and challenges the tenets of the Good Neighbor Policy by asking how Americans can be good neighbors when their basic operating method was to see their ways as superior and expect Mexicans to adapt to their needs, desires, and whims. Mena shows that while there might have been potential for cultural exchange and learning, the

American tourists remained willfully ignorant of Mexican cultural values and mores. The behavior of Mena's tourists and the behavior of the ideal tourist reflect a cross current in trends. Merrill describes how American tourists' attitudes about multinationalism and expansion manifested in the 1920s: "Some travelers perceived Mexico to be one giant, wide-open town where Yankee consumer power knew no bounds. Others viewed travel as a more interactive endeavor—a manifestation of U.S. power and economic wherewithal, to be sure, but also an opportunity to commune with another culture and return home sporting an international badge of honor" (33). Underlying this explanation is the undeniable realization that tourists were participating in a hemispheric project that would expand American interests in Mexico through their consumption—of culture, people, products, and artifacts.

Collecting artifacts for one's personal library or curiosity is repugnant to most as it signifies exploitation of native cultures and folkways. However, in the 1920s and 30s as excavation sites opened to the tourist public in Mexico, artifact collection went largely unpunished and unregulated. The implications of artifact collection are important in the short stories because they signify unequal power relationships and class structure, and the symbolism links the collector to the collected from in unintended ways. For instance, Miss Young collects photographs and accidentally leaves her gold vanity set, and when Petra picks it up the exchange becomes a reverse collection of artifacts. When Miss Young decides to leave it at the religious shrine, she appears to have graciously foregone the benefits she got from the set. While this might seem noble, she refers to the set as "danglums" indicating that it wasn't as valuable as she originally contended (9). In an ironic twist, this comment mirrors one of the associated problems with handicrafts and

tourism; according to Bueno, “the presence of visitors stimulated the falsification industry. Travelers not only bought phony pieces but some even commissioned locals to make them” (69). Miss Young participates in a hyper inflated artifact market, but does so by bringing her own artifacts to leave. Exchanging falsified or valueless artifacts raises significant questions about authenticity of experience and the inability to articulate how a signifier, if it is in fact fake, can stand in for an industry, or an empire. Furthermore, the questions of authenticity implicate guest and host in a more complicated relationship—and Mena challenges this dichotomy masterfully when she reverses the collection of artifacts.<sup>18</sup> If as Merrill contends, “Travelling consumers, moreover, often looked upon their hosts primarily as providers of services whose wares could be snatched up for a pittance. Mayan pottery prominently displayed on the fireplace mantel [...] symbolically and materially conveyed U.S. affluence and domination in world affairs” (13), then Miss Young’s attitude early in the story, that this literally is her house, is an even more disturbing reversal when she does not mind leaving her vanity set behind—to convey materially and symbolically the benevolence of the New Woman, technology, cosmetics, and gilded artifacts.<sup>19</sup> In terms of domestic violence, the reaction Miss Young has to the appropriation of her vanity set shows how the white savior myth is enacted and also injects the scene with the violent expectations surrounding beauty and worth.

Sexual and racial conquest also function as artifacts tourists collected, and stories about conquest served the interests of the reading public. As *Century Magazine* stopped publishing Mena’s stories about Mexico, they began publishing Porter’s.<sup>20</sup> In fact, for all that she’s well known as a Southern writer, Porter’s first publications were stories set in Mexico. Critics’ regard for Porter as a “regional” writer, then, also supports the view of



Mexico as part of the “Global South.” Her writing reinforces dominant stereotypes about Mexicans, women and men, yet Porter too reveals ambivalence about the ways Americans approach Mexico with a sense of entitlement. Actually, Porter herself approaches Mexico with a sense of entitlement in terms of calling it her “familiar country” and claiming to understand Mexico and Mexicans better than the other American journalists and short story writers. Her disdain for these groups of people appears in her correspondence and short stories. Her writings satisfy reader curiosity about Mexico, but her positionality seriously calls into question her ability to write objectively.

In “Virgin Violeta,” one of the first stories Porter ever published, she writes about an elite Mexican family from a third-person limited perspective—that of the fifteen-year-old daughter Violeta. The girl imagines herself in love with her cousin, a poet and her sister’s suitor, Carlos. Having read all of his poetry, Violeta believes that she can impress him with her knowledge of his work. When she attempts to do so, he assaults and kisses her, then makes her feel ashamed for leading him on. Violeta, with all her romantic dreams dashed, does not want him to kiss her again ever. When she rejects his supposedly brotherly (and entirely customary) kiss upon leaving the gathering, her family thinks she has become hysterical. Not only does he assault her but her reaction to his continued antagonism renders her the victim of familial expectations about women’s diseases—especially hysteria and insanity. Carlos has done more violence than a sexual assault. In this light he has also enacted gender violence and domestic violence by destabilizing her home environment. While this story is about relationships in elite

Mexican families, especially the role of women, it actually has a lot to say about whiteness and racialized domestic spaces within Mexico.

Carlos's undeniable whiteness and sense of entitlement positions the story as about race and male privilege within a context of domestic violence. Porter codes Carlos as white from the beginning of the narrative by describing Carlos, who is courting Blanca, in terms of "his pale eyes" (29) and his "furry, golden eyebrows" (30). These physical characteristics reveal his whiteness, but later in the story his eyes figuratively represent whiteness with respect to absence and coldness as after he assaults Violeta, she expects to "sink into a look warm and gentle" but instead, "His eyes were bright and shallow [...] His pale, fluffy eyebrows were arched" (36). Whiteness here is associated with cold. Because he views Violeta as less than himself or Blanca (whose name means white), he feels entitled to her emotions and sexuality, much like Alicia Cherry views Popo as less than herself. Blanca's whiteness complements Carlos's Europeanization because, as Violeta observes, "It was really very hard, knowing that Blanca was nicer only because she was allowed to powder and perfume herself" (32). Like Petra, Violeta equates powder with power, especially in terms of whiteness and what that privilege affords one. Carlos is at the house because he's about to go away to Paris for a season. Even though he's purportedly a "cousin," he feels that his travel is more significant than the family's activities and becomes petulant when Blanca claims that it has grown too late to read his poems. Porter's ambivalence toward the white presence in elite Mexican homes is evident. Carlos's behavior brings violence into the domestic space of the family, even as he claims to be part of that family. As American tourists visited Mexico, the

hemispheric extension of the American family unavoidably created domestic violence through sexual and racial threats.

The sexual violation in “Virgin Violeta” is the subject of much critical discussion. When examined as a scene of domestic violence, the event works on multiple levels to explain how Porter attempts sympathy with Mexican women but still manages to reify white privilege in Mexican spaces. The religious imagery in the scene sets up a pun on the title. Violeta is sitting beneath a painting of the Virgin while Carlos and Blanca read poetry. When Carlos assaults her, she becomes the violated Virgin. Mary Titus argues that Violeta is “buffeted between the twin poles of male fantasy” through being “both Virgin and Violated” and points out that Violeta “struggle[s] against the defining language and erotic gaze of the more power male character” (62). However, unlike Blanca and the Virgin, Violeta is already racialized before Carlos assaults her. The narrative describes her as having “the silence and watchfulness of a young wild animal, but no native wisdom” (30). By describing her thus, the narrative makes her rape able on multiple levels: she’s an animal, a soiled virgin, and lacks wisdom. Violeta imagines herself one of the nuns who dances across broken glass as a tribute to Carlos’s poem (32). The image of hurting for love as woman’s role and aspiration is one of the biggest psychological myths about domestic violence. Therefore, Violeta is not only a violated virgin; she’s also violet—bruised and purple from the domestic violence she both imagines and experiences. Upon assaulting her, Carlos asks, “What did you expect when you came out here alone with me?” (37). He shifts all blame for violence to Violeta, claiming, in essence, that the violence was excusable because she had asked for it. The

assault sullies Violeta's reputation and further racializes her, making her not only lacking in native wisdom but purple to boot.

Porter easily makes the point that women's positions, even as elites, are tenuous with regard to defending themselves against domestic violence.<sup>21</sup> However, hemispherically, there are larger implications in the white (European and American) influence in and on Mexico. If Carlos is meant to be representative of European interests—and with his poetry and travels to Paris, it is reasonable to say that he is—then the story reinforces aspects of the Good Neighbor Policy which cast American tourists in a better, more genteel light. Yet, by racializing, and rendering Violeta less sympathetic, Porter objectifies her for an American reading public. Furthermore, othering her excuses Carlos's behavior and allows the reader also to view Violeta as hysterical. Porter seems to condemn the sexual threat white men represent for Mexican women, but the narrative itself, even though Violeta's perspective is paramount, also victimizes her as a shy, caged bird, who at the same time expresses an animal sexuality she cannot own.<sup>22</sup> Essentially the story holds Violeta doubly responsible, as virgin and whore, for sexual victimization and transgression. Because she becomes the double-bind, Violeta is a threat to white womanhood; she desires Carlos but his violation of her goes far beyond what she had imagined. Violating the younger sister taints Carlos's relationship with Blanca, and the insinuation is that women with animal sexuality threaten more demure and proper women's relationships with their lovers. Violeta is the fallen one in this love triangle—Carlos goes to Europe, Blanca is unaware of what has happened, but Violeta must pay the consequences. She claims that she cannot go back to her convent school because there is “nothing to be learned there” (39). As a victim of domestic violence, religion and family

are no longer solaces for Violeta. She must follow her own path to recovery, but there's no suggestion for what that might be.

The sexual threat white (often Anglo) men present in Mexico is part of the domestic violence enacted on Mexican spaces and bodies. In the 1920s, Porter portrays Carlos as elite and white while he objectifies Mexican women. However, that racialized sexual violence stems from much earlier depictions of Mexican women. Stephen Crane offers an appallingly misogynistic description of Mexican women: "The Mexican women are beautiful frequently but there seems to be that quality lacking which makes the bright quick eyes of some girls so adorable to the contemplative sex. It has something to do with the mind, no doubt. Their black eyes are as beautiful as gems. The trouble with the gem however is that it cannot regard you with sudden intelligence, comprehension, sympathy" (67). In his comments, Crane foreshadows Porter's view that Violeta is a wild animal with no native intelligence. The animalistic portrayal of women of color continues to dehumanize and exoticize women, making them vulnerable to violence. In this way, the writers suggest that, lacking intelligence, Mexican women, regardless of social status become objects. Merrill shows how male travel narratives reinforced a masculinist discourse by allowing male readers to shore up a "sense of racial superiority to Mexican men" by writing "moral outrage directed at gender inequality in Mexico, couched within a titillating sexual fantasy that featured shy, brown-skinned women" (43). Not only did male travel narratives do this, but Porter's stories as well allow East Coast readers to object to the caged birds of Mexico while reinforcing a fantasy about sexually available women.<sup>23</sup> A key difference in Mena's stories is that while she does assign blame for gender inequality in Mexico to patriarchal structures, she does not suggest that it is

acceptable for American men (or women) to exploit Mexicans as long as it is “to a lesser degree.”

The racialized violence in “Virgin Violeta” debunks the myth Americans had believed about racial equality in Mexico. While seemingly firmly set within elite Mexico, the racialization of Violeta and the affirmation of Blanca and Carlos’s whiteness, lends credence to José Limón’s comment that the story “offers a scathing look at the bourgeois and racially white Mexican gentility, its empty salon talk and romantic fantasies in the midst of impoverished Mexico” (42). Even within a home there are gender inequalities that affect the domestic situation within Mexico. The myth that Mexico was a more welcoming place for African Americans and non-whites in general overlooks the rampant white privilege American tourists exerted in Mexico. In her description of Langston Hughes’s visit with his father in Mexico, Cocks explains that while his father had done well for himself, Hughes did feel racial pressure in Mexico and “being a tourist in Mexico affirmed his African American identity, just as it would affirm for many white Americans their national-racial superiority: the whole point is to go home again” (233). Mexico did not offer a race-blind paradise, despite the rhetoric of a *raza cosmica* espoused by Don Ramon and others, rather opportunities for exploitation on the basis of race and class were rampant and American tourists (and speculators) took advantage of indigenous and mestizo peoples, even in several cases going so far as to see elite Mexicans as beneath themselves socially and ethnically. While Porter claimed to love Mexico as a familiar country, it’s telling that she “who felt so attached to Mexican Indians in their own place, over time acquired the anti-(local) Mexican prejudices of her surrounding culture in Texas” (Limón 68-69). The racial double bind that accepts

Mexicans in Mexico while ignoring or discriminating against Mexicans in the United States through Jim Crow reveals an insidious form of domestic violence that allowed tourists to claim some knowledge of Mexico and Mexicans without acknowledging that Mexicans were part of the United States as well. Porter, who so resented the “foreign visitors [to Mexico] who became Mexican specialists overnight” (Delpar 34), engaged in hemispheric violence herself by bolstering white privilege at the expense of Mexican bodies.<sup>24</sup> Porter’s entitlement extends to publishing where her stories usurped Mena’s as authoritative renderings of the Mexican countryside and people.

Porter’s stories are troubling because they do not easily fall into a category of condemnation of the American visitor’s violence toward Mexico and Mexicans even as they do satirize the self-satisfied American aggrandizement. Like Crane, Porter does grasp how American entitlement to Mexican spaces creates domestic violence and instability within Mexico, but because her stories usurp Mena’s representations of Mexico in the American reading public’s access, they seem even more problematic. In an odd bit of metacriticism, through disdain for other Americans travelling in and writing about Mexico, Porter criticizes her own privilege in writing about Mexico, on some level creating a self-conscious desire to mitigate domestic violence by tourists but justify her own presence in Mexico. Again, positionality complicates the narratives because Porter and Crane have so much freedom to travel within Mexico, but Mena seeks refuge in the United States from the violence within Mexico, against other Mexicans. Blaming Mexicans for their complicity in domestic violence, through sexual availability or charges of corruption, seeks to transfer responsibility for the violence, but Porter’s stories (and Crane’s) cannot hide the racialized violence foreign visitors bring. This attempt to

transfer blame for domestic violence reveals the complex ways that tourists bring colonial violence inadvertently to the people they live and travel among. I examine blame more closely in the next chapter, as I explore how Mexican American men write about domestic violence against Mexican American women in the pivotal World War II era.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> While I focus on “The Five White Mice,” it is worth noting that the magazine was publishing a variety of stories about the frontier.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Schurz’s 1893 article “Manifest Destiny” in *Harper’s* is particularly telling with regard to American’s sense of entitlement toward the hemisphere. As he discusses the linking of the US with Mexico, he realizes the impulse “would spring from motives of a different kind—not the feeling of naturally belonging together [as in the case of Canada], but the desire on our part to gain certain commercial advantages; to get possession of the resources of other countries, and by exploiting them to increase our wealth; to occupy certain strategical positions which in case of war might be of importance, and so on” (739).

<sup>3</sup> John Carlos Rowe has a very interesting discussion of Crane’s “distance” when writing about native peoples and he explores the nuances of Crane’s sympathies and declarations of the need for modernization as well as his resistance to outright criticism of US foreign policy even though he does criticize many other countries for “Expansionist policies intended primarily to profit the home country” (157).

<sup>4</sup> The first paragraph of Fredrick Jackson Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” quotes the 1890 Census that “closes” the frontier: “The unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line” and Turner assigns this masculinist meaning to the statement: “The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development” (1).

<sup>5</sup> This image is in direct opposition to the conclusion Crane comes to in “A Man and Some Others” in which the protagonist ends up shooting the Mexicans who threaten him. John-Michael Rivera contends that through this outcome, “What the reader and Bill learn, then, is that the southwest and America’s „public domain“ is not an unreal tale of romance; it is a brutally real site of social conflict” (77). While I agree with his interpretation of “A Man and Some Others,” I show that the social conflict in “The Five White Mice” is so exaggerated that the Kid has no choice but to recognize his own vulnerability in the face of the honorable Mexican, an attribute which Crane does not offer the men, the “Others.”

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<sup>6</sup> The usefulness of temperance and the temperance movement appear in stories by all three authors. The use of temperance imagery and politics establishes a connection to stereotypical domestic concerns of women because women were leaders in the temperance movement. Furthermore, one of the goals of temperance was to alleviate the likelihood of domestic violence (or wife-beating, as it was called at the time).

<sup>7</sup> Amy Kaplan makes a similar point with regard to Mark Twain's travel narratives about Hawaii. After he gets saddle sores from riding a horse he acquired from natives, he blames the natives for taking advantage of his lack of knowledge. Kaplan correctly attributes this to the "stereotype of the conniving native [which] inadvertently acknowledges the traveler's foreignness and vulnerability, and his dependence on native knowledge and resources to gain access to the landscape" but she does point out that all of this unfolds "within the colonial struggle over the possession and dispossession of the land" (65).

<sup>8</sup> In a similar move, Rebecca Schreiber, discussing an American writer from the 1950s, Willard Motley, argues that through "disassembl[ing] the narrowly circumscribed perspective and exoticized realism of the conventional travel narrative [authors can show] Mexicans looking back, returning the gaze of the tourist, and disrupting the omniscient imperial gaze that constructs the world as a spectacle to be consumed" (138).

<sup>9</sup> All three writers in this chapter portray Mexicans stereotypically, but in the context of their stories, Crane and Mena's portrayals are much more nuanced and ambivalent than Paredes makes them out to be. They are concerned with how Anglo encroachment into Mexican domestic spaces affects Mexican bodies. Porter actually assigns blame to Mexicans and Anglos with less attempt at ambivalence toward the Anglo's position.

<sup>10</sup> Like the gun and survey equipment the American brings in Romaine Fielding's 1912 film *The Rattlesnake*, the camera, guidebook, and gold vanity set hold more symbolism. Indeed, Petra's reaction to the camera is akin to having a gun in her face. The camera takes the exotic bodies back to Austin and Miss Young's friends, while the guidebook, like the survey equipment before it, takes ownership of the land.

<sup>11</sup> In this way, Mena employs a double-voiced discourse much like that present in the testimonios.

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, in the 1916 Pershing Expedition against Pancho Villa, the meddling backfired for the US and Villa made US military power look “bullying and ineffective” (Merrill 33). US military intervention was always a threat, which is why Villa’s actions were so celebrated.

<sup>13</sup> This line harkens back to the line in “The Gold Vanity Set” in which the narrator comments on how presumptuous a US custom it is for Miss Young to lead the entire party into the house after misinterpreting Don Ramón’s invitation.

<sup>14</sup> Gretchen Murphy’s comment that the “conventional use of the feminine pronoun for the nation begins to personify the United States as an embodied female figure with a voice” (36) is an apt starting point for the implications of the female tourist imposing hemispheric violence.

<sup>15</sup> The use of cosmetics to advance whiteness also appears in “The Gold Vanity Set” as Petra sees her darkness for the first time and uses powder to cover it up.

<sup>16</sup> As I’ll examine in more detail in the next chapter, Mexicans in the US from 1910-1930 were exploited as a labor force and then reviled as a strain on the economy.

<sup>17</sup> One manifestation of this phenomenon is the continuing popularity of the Ramona pageant in California that is based on Helen Hunt Jackson’s novel. According to [www.ramonabowl.com](http://www.ramonabowl.com), it’s the “Nations Longest Running Outdoor Drama.”

<sup>18</sup> Amy Kaplan makes a fascinating point about artifacts and the relationship between hosts and guest in her discussion of Twain’s participation in Hawai’ian cultural looting. In Twain’s stories, she finds a moment where tourists collecting bones get them all mixed up. She comments, It’s “promiscuous in the sense of dissolving boundaries that collecting is meant to maintain, turning the American tourists into cannibals and headhunters” (69).

<sup>19</sup> Kyla Schuller also makes the point that Petra and other Mexican characters have agency because they “are also active consumers who appropriate the goods of the beauty industry according to their own religious and cultural interpretations, some applications of which work on the discursive level precisely to counter the growing influence of the North American economic control” (83).

<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, *Century* had also published Crane’s “A Man and Some Others.”

<sup>21</sup> Thomas F. Walsh suggests that Carlos, and his violence are based on Salomón de la Selva, a poet whose poem about nuns dancing over glass appears in “Virgin Violeta.” Porter and de la Selva had an

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affair that may have resulted in an abortion in 1921 (64). Regardless, Carlos's brutality and domestic violence contributes to an interpretation of the text as one condemning men's violence toward women.

<sup>22</sup> The plot here is actually very similar to "The Education of Popo" in which the white, more experienced, older sexual predator does violence against the younger, Mexican romantic dreamer. Rob Johnson has noted how similar in content some of Porter's stories are to Mena's and the fact that they were published in the same venue raises eyebrows. For instance, Mena's "The Vine-Leaf" and Porter's "The Martyr" follow almost exactly the same plot only to deviate at the end, significantly. It could be a coincidence that the editors of *Century Magazine* stopped publishing Mena's stories around 1920 and started publishing Porter's in 1922 to satisfy the reading public's desire for stories about Mexico, but it seems more likely that Mena's stories' ironies got a little uncomfortable for the editors.

<sup>23</sup> Even Mena's stories activate the stereotype of the black-eyed, shy beauty, especially her description of Petra, and the effeminizing view of Popo. And by the 1930s, the Mexican government exploits the image of Mexican women through travel promotion documents which featured a "modernized *indígena*" who "appeared as a dark-skinned Aztec princess" or as a mestiza in "traditional garb in front of a detailed backdrop of volcanic mountains, plants, burros, and churches" which Merrill claims "for Mexicans, her appearance resonated national unity" (93). Thus, the racialized, sexualized depiction of Mexican women is fraught with muddled symbolism and raises questions of exploitation with regard to who an image is serving and why.

<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, white American tourist racism did not end after the 1930s. Schreiber's interesting commentary about author Willard Motley, writing from Mexico in the 1950s and 60s comments that "Living outside the United States influenced Motley to think in international terms about racial and economic inequalities [...] It was white Americans' racist treatment of both African Americans and Mexicans that lead Motley to relate U.S. racism and imperialism" (169). However, much of his commentary was deleted by his editors and never published.

#### Chapter Four: She's Causing a Scene (of Domestic Violence)

Up to this point, domestic violence has signaled a double-voiced discourse by women writers about the conditions of their homes, communities, and nation. However, when men write about domestic violence, there is another voice to the discourse—one that warns women not to tell cultural outsiders about violence at the same time that it implicates women in their own subjugation by suggesting that they desire the violent expressions of “love.” In this sense, these scenes of domestic violence present in short stories, novels, and a comedy sketches blame women as cultural betrayers who deserve and like violence. But, within these narratives is an undeniable Chicana presence that belies the narrative of male dominance; she picks herself up and goes on with her life, creating her own agency in the process. Furthermore, the writers inadvertently undermine male privilege at the same time they are trying to justify male dominance over women in their communities.

All of these texts occur just before, during, or after World War II, which is a particularly tumultuous time for Mexican Americans. The pachuco (zoot suiters) beatings in Los Angeles, the assertions of patriotism in New Mexico, and the military as a way for young Mexican American men to “get ahead” all converge with women working outside the home, the legacy of the Mexican Revolution, and the changing economic conditions in the United States. For instance, as Mexican American women entered the workforce views of acceptable social independence did differ, ranging from having the freedom to smoke, wear lipstick, wear pants, and date without chaperones to expecting equality in decision making at home and the right to education. Some

women commented that their independence during the war prepared them for being widows or divorced women after the war. (Griswold del Castillo 66)

Scenes of domestic violence in fiction serve to show how anxieties about women's changing roles cannot be contained within the home; rather women and their abilities spill out into the nation. Furthermore, these particular scenes of domestic violence all rely on war and its threat to masculinity and Mexican American citizenship as a backdrop.

This chapter begins with a discussion of a comedy sketch (1935) by Jesus and Netty Rodríguez that uses the threat of domestic violence to interrogate the place of women in Mexico and the United States. The text draws distinctions among home, land, and homeland to complicate the ways that the characters imagine themselves in their communities. I then examine Mario Suárez's "Las comadres" first published in 1969, but set just post-WWII. This selection does not idealize the barrio but implicates the war in changing roles for men and women. In the short story "Macaria's Daughter," Américo Paredes takes a horrific look at violence in response to women's liberation. The next two scenes come from the novels *George Washington Gómez* (1936) by Paredes and *Pocho* (1958) by José Antonio Villarreal. These two novels contain scenes of domestic violence that police the boundaries of women's sexuality but ultimately create space for women to emerge as Chicanas, controlling their own sexuality and futures. Moreover, the male protagonists of these works are speechless in the face of domestic violence, signaling anxiety about men's place in a new world where women work outside the home and make their own sexual choices.

Jesus and Netty Rodriguez were a comedy duo that performed throughout the Southwest in the 1920s and 30s and in New York in the 1950s. The comedy sketch "I'm

Going to Mexico” by Jesus and Netty Rodríguez, first performed in 1935, imagines a scenario where the characters can create a homeland in their minds that precedes their need to redeem the political homeland. Their exchange over whether or not to return to Mexico is a telling scene of domestic violence—one that Jesus suggests Netty brings down on herself. She starts by asking them why they should return to Mexico when they no longer have land in that country:

JESUS: Well, this ungrateful woman is mistaken! If she squawks because she’s here, I’ll break her leg, just to remind her of me.

NETTY: Ah, aren’t you the tough guy! Get out of here with your threats! If you call a cop, you’ll see he pays attention to me!

JESUS: I’ll show you!

NETTY: Go ahead! Hit me!

JESUS: Why should I hit you? Back home in Mexico there are plenty women who’ll want me!

NETTY: Boy, aren’t you exaggerating, Pancho! But I don’t care, *compadre*, I’ve got the road wide open to go wherever I want.

JESUS: Well, I hope you’re happy, baby. If you don’t want to come, go ahead and stay. It won’t kill me. Down there there’s lots of women who’ll love me. When I get to Manzanillo, I’ll hook up with somebody else. And down there I won’t be so stupid, I’ll look for a real woman who doesn’t give up, and who knows how to be grateful for her husband’s hard work. A completely Mexican woman who doesn’t change her mind and who doesn’t give up tortillas for

hotcakes and ham.

NETTY: Now you've gone too far. (439-40)

This scene engages significant themes for this chapter. Most of the duo's work gives Jesus the writing credit, but La Bella Netty achieved fame in her own right as a vocalist and comedian. In this performance, Jesus's insistence on Netty's fault in the situation makes this sketch a scene of domestic violence from the male perspective. For instance, Netty doesn't take Jesus's earlier threat to "break her leg" seriously. Instead, she tells him that he's gone too far when he accuses her of cultural betrayal. He accuses her of liking material things and the Anglo law too much. She feels the sting of this accusation when he threatens her with a return to a country where they no longer have land holdings, probably due to the Mexican Revolution, an event that also probably prompted their move to the United States.<sup>1</sup> Their discussion of Mexico, the land there, and the homeland in their hearts is bound up in the scene of domestic violence threatened here.

The historical context for this scene sheds light on the nuances of both characters' positions. While the Mexican Revolution created immigrant categories that included Maria Cristina Mena, a member of a privileged Mexican elite seeking shelter for their daughters, it also created immigrant categories of peasant women escaping the threats of rape and kidnapping that the soldiers in the Revolution posed (Ruiz *From* 8). With the start of World War I, the United States invited Mexican workers to labor in fields, canneries, and mines as part of the first bracero program called Temporary Admissions Program. Through a series of contracts, the worker was attached to an employer, yet even with the regulation, when the program ended in 1921, it was declared a failure, largely because it "had little affect in slowing the ongoing dispersal of Mexican immigrant



communities” (Gamboa 272). In other words, Mexican families who had moved into communities did not return to Mexico or the Southwest at the end of the war. They had been victims of employer fraud and sought work for themselves.<sup>2</sup> The historical events surrounding the Revolution, the bracero program, and the Depression all shed light on why Jesus and Netty’s characters are in the United States at all as well as why they might not want to return to Mexico even as they desire to see their homeland again.

The onset of the Depression created conditions that would see the rise of race specific discrimination against Mexican Americans. The 1929 Immigration Act made entry into the US a felony. A *Los Angeles Times* article in 1931 quotes Secretary of Labor William Doak as saying “We are aiming only at undesirable aliens as a general group [...] I am informed that many of those deported recently left vacant jobs for worthy citizens in need of employment” (“Give” 96). Furthermore, a group of veterans in Indiana saw Mexican Americans as a threat to societal resources and employment opportunities for the city and county. Paul Kelly writes to Doak: “If we were able to transport all of the Mexicans who are willing to return to their native country, there would be few, if any remaining here. They cannot withstand the rigors of our severe winter seasons, many of them are afflicted with syphilis, more of them are afflicted with tuberculosis, and they certainly present a difficult social problem” (102). Clearly Anglo attitudes toward Mexican Americans reveal a kind of simmering domestic violence that blames Mexican Americans for their health problems. There is a contradiction, though, in that many of the documents claim that Mexicans are simultaneously lazy and responsible for taking jobs from real Americans. The racism in these positions spurred deportations, and as Ruiz points out “Between 1931 and 1934, an estimated one-third of the Mexican population in

the United States (over 500,000 people) were either deported or repatriated to Mexico even though the majority were native U.S. citizens” (*From 29*). “I’m Going to Mexico” responds to the racism and domestic violence of the United States by positioning Jesus as a character whose desire to return to a Mexican homeland is an act of self-deportation in congruence with US policies. Netty’s position, that there is nothing left for them in Mexico, resists these deportation ideologies and asserts her independent agency.

When Jesus compares Netty to the “good” Mexican woman who follows her husband, he tries to shame her into behaving. She does not fall for this tactic, claiming that her position as a woman who makes her own way is superior to the difficulties she would face in Mexico. George Sánchez argues in *Becoming Mexican American* that women had more difficulty in adjusting to their changed roles after deportation (218). For instance, the Mexican government hoped the more “Americanized” repatriates would concoct programs to benefit the small communities they returned to, but those whose social position had changed as a result of being in the US experienced dissatisfaction and either wanted to return to the US or gave up their “American ways” and did not do anything significant for their communities. Netty rejects the prescribed gender roles Jesus expects her to follow and her sense that returning will not benefit her shows how her resistance challenges assumptions about assimilation, gender, and radicalism.

Movement back to Mexico will not solve the couple’s problem; Netty has agency and she plans to exercise her abilities. Female agency is one reason the threat to “break her leg” seems viable to Jesus; however, Netty is not afraid of this. She suggests that if he calls a cop to make her follow him and behave, the police officer is more likely to listen to Netty. This comment suggests several possibilities: first, it signifies that there is

awareness of domestic violence and law enforcement may get involved; second, her comment shows a difference in expectations for American and Mexican women; third, it offers the possibility of the power of her speech in that the cop will “pay attention” to her because she speaks better English than Jesus and will have the opportunity to speak to the officer<sup>3</sup>; and finally, it carries a veiled sexual threat—depending on performance—of the cop paying sexual attention to Netty. Each of these possibilities offers intriguing glimpses into the scene. For the first, domestic violence in this sketch belies the stereotypical ending. While Netty embraces the homeland, she has not backed down on her agency within the home. Peter Heany points out in his study of the duo that in most of the dialogues, when domestic violence is deployed against women, “the unfaithful wife emerges as a trickster figure of sorts” (179). In “I’m Going to Mexico,” Netty has not been sexually unfaithful to her husband, but he sees her as culturally unfaithful. She is expected to keep quiet when he threatens her, so as to not bring the American law’s attention to their home. Here there exists what Crystal Parikh describes as “The anxiety that the minority insider might come to serve as the traitorous informant on his or her community [...] and often comes with a mandate to „not tell“” (249). Netty will tell though. Her gender, ethnic, and class consciousness responds to the patriarchal, colonial violence Jesus threatens.

The second possibility, a clashing of Mexican and American customs, implicates Jesus as much as it does Netty. In a study of several dialogues by Jesus and Netty Rodríguez, Haney found “Were we to take the dialogues as transparent reflections of social reality, we might infer that *mexicanas* in the San Antonio of the 1920s and 1930s were more motivated by prestige, more attracted to the dominant language and culture,

more inclined to reject their Mexican heritage, and more likely to mix English and Spanish than their male counterparts” (177). In “I’m Going to Mexico,” Jesus is the one who accuses her of being too Americanized, but he also threatens to divorce her. Without realizing it, he has become more American too, buying into the possibility of trading Netty in for a newer, more docile model. Otherwise, Jesus, reading only the third possibility, might see this comment as an empty threat. Because the “third phase of repatriation produced the most overt examples of abuse and manipulation, and certainly increased the level of racial discrimination by local officials against Mexican Americans,” it’s possible that Netty would not have dared to invite an Anglo legal establishment into her home (Sánchez *Becoming* 223). At the very least, if she could pass herself off as an American citizen, she might have worried that Jesus would be deported, breaking up the family. Additionally, Sánchez suggests that Anglo law enforcement cannot be seen as benevolent, in that “Mexicans who stayed behind also retain memories of relatives, neighbors, and fellow workers who departed under questionable circumstances” (224). In this instance, it does not matter who has been corrupted by American ways, both of them must come to terms with the violent possibilities in American law enforcement and the cultural memory of violence toward Mexican Americans from US legal structures.<sup>4</sup>

The fourth possibility, that Netty threatens Jesus with sexual infidelity—getting in bed with Anglo law enforcement—reflects some of the anxieties that appear in subsequent stories I examine in this chapter. However, for the purposes of this scene, the meaning depends on performance. As Nicholas Kanellos points out, attending *mexicana/o* theater was a patriotic duty for Mexican expatriates that would be both

educational and moral (“Two” 76).<sup>5</sup> If indeed Netty threatens Jesus here, his response, to accuse her of cultural betrayal, carries the message for Mexican American women that losing her homeland is tantamount to losing her femininity. Her agency and value depends on her ability to seek a homeland with her husband rather than speak to the Anglo authorities. A Mexican American woman in the 1920s and 1930s felt pressure to maintain traditional familial duty within the home even as she had contradictory impulses to support her family with wage labor outside the home (Ruiz “Star” 112). Netty capitulates to familial expectations because she cannot accept the charge of cultural betrayal.

This sketch reveals tension between the land in Mexico and the homeland Mexican Americans are supposed to feel in their hearts. The scene ends stereotypically with Netty giving in to Jesus’s desire as she says, “Oh, Panchito baby, I can’t stand it anymore. My homeland has won out. I want to go, too” (440). In some ways, Netty has declared a search for Aztlán. She acknowledges that despite the fact that they no longer have land in Mexico, they are still Mexican and must change their relationship even as they maintain a homeland in their hearts. Through this scene of domestic violence, the text performs an operation on the words home, land, and homeland. In this way domestic violence operates on multiple levels: the threat of Anglo law in the home to stop domestic violence, which could become domestic violence against both of them; the loss of land from civil war, itself a form of domestic violence; and the need to create a homeland within a nation not their own, a response to colonization and domestic violence within the nation.

Women's ability to work outside the home and how men respond to this emerging financial independence reflects the changing social mores of World War II and afterward. "Las comadres," a short story by Mario Suárez published in *Con Safos* in 1969 seems to blame women for wanting men to take control—physically, financially, and emotionally. A veteran, Suárez took advantage of the GI Bill and began writing in college. Generally suggested to be overwhelmingly beneficial for minorities, the GI Bill complicated opportunities for women—who had difficulty taking advantage of it even if they qualified for benefits—even as it purportedly expanded opportunities for minority men. As Glenn Altschuler and Stuart Blumin point out, even though the bill did not discriminate in and of itself, the "majority of beneficiaries were white—and the legislation did not act affirmatively to overcome Jim Crow institutions and instrumentalities—the GI Bill did not reduce racial disparities in the United States" (129). Yet, the Bill did offer many minority veterans employment and education training who might not have been able to afford it. With the waves of employable men returning from war, educational opportunities ensured viable job skills and a living stipend. The GI Bill both "challenged the discriminatory admissions policies of many colleges and universities" and simultaneously revealed how "strategic use of scholarships and grants of financial aid, [...] limited numbers of Catholics and Jews, Mexican Americans [etc]" (Altschuler and Blumin 139, 149). Suárez, even though he attended college on the GI Bill, would have experienced these contradictory approaches of discrimination. He may even, as James D. Lilley suggests, be writing as "a nostalgic, conservative mode of discourse that mourns the changes that have beset a privileged and traditional communal space" (103). Indeed he does seem to hold women responsible for negative change in the community. Because

“Las comadres” is set during World War II, but written in 1969, the reality of the GI Bill affects the narrative’s outlook, rendering what looks like gains for Mexican Americans in employment and educational opportunities much more complicated.

Suárez’s story opens with two comadres engaged in conversation about domestic abuse. Anastacia often runs to her neighbor Lola’s house and cries to Lola about the beatings her husband inflicts on her. Without really believing that he will change, Lola assures Anastacia that he will (really, Lola believes that Anastacia brings the beatings on herself by being such a bad housekeeper). Finally to escape the abuse and to empower herself, Anastacia cashes in some war bonds and leaves her husband, moving to the other side of the tracks. However, her daughter gets pregnant by Lola’s son who is joining the army, and Anastacia returns to her husband. They live peacefully, and she thinks he doesn’t love her any more, until he beats her and she is satisfied. According to the narrative, Anastacia cannot escape from her violent relationship because the material conditions of her life pull her back—and her daughter will follow the same path.

The narrator presents a strikingly different point of view from the characters. The short story begins with definitions of comadre and compadre—characterizing men as the agents of the relationship and women as joined through their husbands and a love of *mitote*, gossip. In this way, the narrative already blames women for their misfortune because they have nothing better to do than to gossip. The narrative blames Anastacia for being a “lousy housekeeper” which causes her husband to beat her (55). Lola suggests that he will change, but she wants to tell Anastacia “to correct her housekeeping habits” (57).<sup>6</sup> The conflict between women exemplifies what Ruiz describes as the “dialectic, often expressed as a conflict between personal liberation or family first” that forms a

“theme of Chicana feminist history” (*From* 102). Here, Lola discourages Anastacia’s desire for personal liberation by suggesting that she conform to the domestic sphere. This conflict intensifies when Anastacia moves out of the barrio and becomes the subject of gossip for Lola and her friends. Not until Anastacia comes to believe that her husband only loves her when he beats her and, because of this, continues her bad housekeeping does she become acceptable to the other women. In fact, they take no notice of her screams, justifying the home space as private and familial.

The specter of war plays a significant role in the narrative and links Anastacia’s escape from a violent situation in her home to the cycle of violence Anastacia’s daughter will experience. In order to leave the situation, Anastacia cashes in war bonds and moves. No one hears from her, but gossip suggests that “she was now working at the air base and had dyed her hair” (57). Anastacia has benefited to some degree from the war; she is able to use the bonds to remove herself and her daughters from the abusive, violent El Hoyo barrio. However, she has also sold out, in that she dyes her hair, works for the war machine, rejects gender roles, and, most significantly, betrays her people and denies her old self by saying, “I do not know any Lola López” (57). Because gossip is responsible for word getting out about the betrayal, it is clear that the women in the barrio resent Anastacia’s work and social mobility and attempt to rein her in.<sup>7</sup> Anastacia’s fictional experience mirrors many women’s lived experiences during the war. One woman working at Douglass Aircraft as a riveter during the war “became aware that her financial abilities irritated some of her nonworking women friends since she was „getting ahead”” (Quiñonez 255). Anastacia’s exit from the community comes because she experiences a different way of going to war.



Anastacia represents the militarization of the World War and the politics of a more intimate gender war. By going to work for the defense contractor, she rejects gendered space again. The defense industry renders her a Mexican American Rosie the Riveter, and as Catherine Ramírez points out, she was “far from dainty” and “appeared to threaten gender norms” (“Crimes” 17). Ramírez continues, “American women were called upon to contribute to the war effort by sacrificing their allegedly innate femininity as they entered the labor force. At the same time, American women—namely, white American women—were expected to do their part for the war by being pretty and ladylike, for they not only remained at home, they embodied the home front” (“Crimes” 18). While Anastacia seems to reject innate femininity by engaging in work outside the home (and conspicuously refusing to do domestic work), she returns to the home and begins to clean thinking that she will regain her husband’s love. However, in a cruel twist of fate, Anastacia believes the beatings means he loves her, and he only beats her when the house is messy—a metaphor for destroying the home front through domestic squalor.

The cycle of domestic violence repeats with Anastacia’s daughter and Lola’s son. As children, they expressed their interest in each other by scratching, biting, and kicking (56), and as adults they marry because of an unplanned pregnancy. Because Tino is going off to war, the pregnancy contrasts Anastacia’s Riveter role by suggesting another of the roles for women during the war. Anastacia’s daughter’s pregnancy signifies that she is a Victory Girl (v-girl) who “pursued sexual relations with servicemen to do their part for the Allied war effort” (Ramírez “Crimes” 14). By being sexually available for a soldier, the daughter embodies women’s complicity with the war, and she rebels against her mother’s lack of femininity as a worker. The wedding takes place while Tino is on leave;

Anastacia's husband gave the daughter his blessing, asking her to be a good wife (58). Anastacia's daughter flaunts her pregnancy, which flies in the face of Ruiz's claim that "autonomy on the part of young women was hard to win in a world where pregnant, unmarried teenagers served as community „examples“ of what might happen to you or your daughter if appropriate measures were not taken" (*From* 63). Instead of being the "bad" sexually available girl, Anastacia's daughter's sexual transgression is cause for celebration and return to domesticity. All of these factors point to a continued cycle of domestic violence that blames the woman for her material and physical conditions. In the midst of this pressure, Anastacia realizes that she can never escape. The war machine and the cycle of domestic violence—one or the other is part of her life, and they have always already imbued her experience as a woman. She must be cultural traitor and gender transgressor or woman, mother, and victim. She cannot reject some elements of femininity without losing her place in the community.

The short story does not idealize the barrio, does not critique the culture of domestic violence, and does not offer economic mobility and assimilation as a way out. The sacred space of the home, in which none of the neighbors will intrude is a common trope in stories of domestic violence.<sup>8</sup> This narrative goes further though, and exoticizes domestic violence, with the final picture of "Anastacia, lying in bed with a pair of black eyes and her hair disheveled" (59). The image of black eyes calls to mind the descriptions of Mexican women's sparkling, flashing, alluring black eyes, but here the descriptions underscores the exoticized construction of violence on Mexican women's bodies as sexy and desir(ed)able. Suárez's representation is not very different from how Porter describes Mexican women's allure and subsequent deserving of sexual abuse. By blaming women

and exoticizing violence against them, this story attempts to relegate Mexican American women to their place within the home and economic structure.

“Las comadres” is a bleak story in its inability to imagine an alternative future for Anastacia, especially in light of her attempts at social and economic mobility. Naomi Quiñonez argues that World War II empowered Mexican American women in unprecedented ways:

Having experienced greater freedom to make decisions about their lives as autonomous individuals, many Mexican American women gained the skills and confidence to manage and negotiate their personal, social, and economic circumstances. Hence the social agency they acquired during the war reinforced a sense of independence that held many implications as they entered the postwar period of the 1950s, when the framework for the Chicana feminism of the 1960s would be constructed. (266)

However, this social advancement does not happen for Anastacia and her daughters. The narrative then presents a serious quandary: if working empowered so many Mexican American women, and helped them save money for their daughters to attend college, why does the narrative relegate Anastacia and her daughter to the continued circle of domestic violence? Other critics find this lack of indictment of domestic violence troubling also: “One hopes that Suárez’s intentions in „Las Comadres“ were to critique the interpersonal relationships fostered by El Hoyo’s patriarchal codes, but the text itself offers no alternative or autonomous space for women either within or outside of the community” (Lilley 115). While I do not agree that there is no space left for women, they must wrestle agency and space from masculine control through reproduction. An alternative reading

might suggest that, possibly, with Tino off at war, Anastacia's daughter can make her own mark in the world as an independent woman and single mother. The text can't support her going to college, but the birth of the "screaming, kicking *chicano*" (58) foreshadows political upheaval in the next generation. In this way, the narrative denigrates Anastacia's contribution to her family by suggesting the possibility for political and social change must come from a male child.

Even though the war itself provided opportunities for women in the workforce and in education, the aftermath of the war created a "patriotic duty" for women to give up those hard earned places in factories and universities. Servicewomen, beneficiaries of the GI Bill, experienced difficulties in taking advantage of the bill: they did not receive a living allowance for a spouse (like the men did) and the government "had not contemplated providing childcare credits and facilities to student-veterans even though the federal government had made allowances for female workers in defense plants during World War II" (Altschuler and Blumin 122). Furthermore, war widows' average income was 33 dollars a week (123). Given these historical conditions, it makes sense that Anastacia's daughter had limited opportunity for social mobility after the war. While women's social position had changed, their economic and educational conditions experienced a strong backlash. Perhaps this explains why the hope for the future in this narrative is a "screaming, kicking *chicano*" (Suárez 58) rather than a Chicana. The narrative, written in 1969, ascribes value to the Chicano Movement without recognizing (yet) the contributions Chicanas make via social protest of their own. However, the narrative supposes Chicana motherwork in recognizing the impossibility of change

without education and economic progress—thereby instilling these values in the Chicano generation.<sup>9</sup>

While domestic violence, law enforcement, and woman blaming are threats in “I’m Going to Mexico” and “Las comadres,” in Américo Paredes’s “Macaria’s Daughter” these themes take a much darker turn. Written around 1943, the story was published in Paredes’s collection in 1994. The political climate of South Texas in 1943 informs the narrative substantially. In the 1920s, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) formed to take on issues such as “jury exclusion of Mexican Americans, white-only primaries, and segregation in all sectors” (Acosta and Winegarten 90). LULAC and other mutual aid societies claims to whiteness for Mexican Americans did not find audience with the US government until the 1940s, but there was urgency in Tejanos’ claim to whiteness. Between 1885 and 1942, Texas had the third highest numbers of lynchings—only Mississippi and Georgia had more (86). In Texas, lynching of Mexican Americans stood in for Southern lynching of Blacks. Mestizo identities as presented in the story complicate the claims to whiteness. With the Good Neighbor policy, Mexican American concerns were put on a national agenda, but in the name of maintaining good relations with Mexico, the US government ignored or downgraded some grievances to keep them from garnering public attention. Attempts to rectify discrimination against Mexican Americans fell woefully short; for instance, in 1943, the legislature passed the Caucasian Race Resolution which prohibited discrimination against Mexican Americans in private businesses but did not “address discrimination against Mexicans in workplaces or schools” (Zamora 81). Acknowledging grievances would mean that discrimination existed, so LULAC pushed for reform but only succeeded incrementally. This resulted in

a scenario in which “state and federal officials [took] notice of racist practices in the Southwest and [sought] resolution in the most egregious cases,” but overall, “the consensus was that demands for justice would be difficult to realize without disrupting the war effort” (Steele “The Federal” 29). In light of these institutionalized forms of racism and inadequate responses from government officials, the novel symbolically tries to wrest power for Mexican American men. Finally, the narrative actively keeps women within their sphere for the good of the community, which is a reaction to the peak of women’s employment in the war effort in 1943, when “women were hired almost three times faster than men” (Zamora 53). Gender violence, especially culturally normalized as it is in “Macaria’s Daughter” did not qualify as an egregious case; rather it was an acceptable way of keeping Mexican American women in their sphere.

The story opens with police cars racing to the scene of a murder. Tony has killed his wife Marcela and the Anglo police—Mac<sup>10</sup> and Pete—have come to investigate. Once there, they assume that there’s not much to investigate; a Mexican has killed his wife for cheating on him: “we all know why a man kills his wife” (24). Two things stand out in this story as comments on domestic violence and the national imagination. The first is that while Tony and the others (especially the town’s women) blame Marcela’s beauty and infidelity for stirring him to violence, her real sin is wanting out of the house. As a hybrid subject she cannot be contained by the home. The second is that Marcela’s body carries markers from historical conditions that affect the way law enforcement views her.

The narrative of patriarchal domination seems to implicate Tony as much as Marcela. In order to keep being a man, he must kill her. The narrative blames expectations of masculinity for the murder. Marcela, who knows the codes, seems to be

asking for violence by leaving the home. Like many of the men in the narratives, Tony acts effeminately when confronted with violence. He thinks he has to kill her but “it was too awful to think about, and he wanted to kneel at the edge of the bed and put his head in her lap and sob” (26).<sup>11</sup> He too struggles against the codes but is not strong enough to break them. The codes infantilize and effeminize Tony.<sup>12</sup> As a femininized subject, Tony is vulnerable to the legal strictures of South Texas and even though he kills his wife to be a man, the action renders him powerless. He does not regain his masculinity or create a social change, instead he reinforces stereotypical thinking about Mexican American men. Ramón Saldivar argues that this story “attempts to imagine a social revolution tied not to anarchist direct action, nor to cultural or symbolic action, but to the gender and feminine consciousness not represented in the other fictions” (“Introduction” xxiii). Because the social revolution is incomplete, it subverts gender roles while simultaneously reinforcing the generative power of the codes of masculinity and femininity.

Within the construct of masculinity and social revolution there is a challenge to cultural codes that are both ambiguous toward Marcela’s infidelity and, simultaneously, very clear that her entering public space is an unacceptable rebellion against cultural codes. Not only is her husband expected to “punish” her for breaking these codes, the rest of the community is complicit in Marcela’s destruction: “Nobody wanted to be hauled into court as a witness, so they were hiding and watching. The women especially. Until they heard her screams, telling them that justice had been served, that their own virtue had been affirmed” (Paredes “Macaria’s” 26). In this scene, three things occur: the narrative reveals a borderlands fear of Anglo law enforcement; the narrative points to women as both deserving of and complicit with domestic violence; and by tying these

two things together, the narrative suggests that women's role in the domestic project of the United States cannot be obscured by patriarchal constructs of male violence.<sup>13</sup> By linking Anglo law enforcement's actions to Tony's murder of Marcela, the narrative clearly connects the violent domestic relationship between Anglotexans and Mexicotexans to the violence in the home.

Marcela's body is the location for multiple sites of historical wounding. Her skin is already marked by its whiteness. Her mother's promiscuity has marked Marcela as hybrid other and illegitimate, but at the same time, she is described as "too pretty" multiple times in the narrative. Her mother and the community perceive her beauty as dangerous. She (by virtue of being too pretty) is asking for trouble from men. Ostensibly to keep Marcela from sexually cavorting with men, her mother beats her. However, the real reason Macaria beats Marcela stems from her own power over her husband, Sam. Tony witnesses Macaria's definition of a good woman, when Macaria explodes over her husband's pleas for her to be quiet, "Damn you, I said shut up! You see [...] Sam can't beat me and make me be good. But you can beat her. You can make her be good all the time. It's wearing me down. If I keep her another year, some goddam pachuco will take her out into the bushes and I'll kill her, by God, I'll kill her" (29-30). In echoes of Anastacia's husband's admonition to their daughter, it seems that Macaria means to control Marcela's sexuality. But the subtext shows that she is actually trying to control Marcela's movement and speech. These are the barriers women are not allowed to transgress and doing so threatens the safety of the community. For instance, Sam cannot force Macaria to be good, and the implication is that she can still go out in public and do



whatever she wants. In this case his impotence shows in his inability to get her to stop talking.

Marcela's early marriage might suggest some sort of agency on her part; after all, she is leaving an abusive relationship for what initially seems like a better situation. Ruiz points out that for young women chafing against the chaperonage of their parents, "A more subtle form of rebellion was early marriage" (*From* 60). She does acknowledge that these young girls merely exchange one form of supervision for another, but her analysis suggests that in the face of desperation to leave their parents, young girls undertook drastic measures. Since Macaria beats Marcela for imagined transgressions, Marcela, it seems, cannot be worse off under Tony's supervision. But of course she can. Tony too does not listen to her when she says she's done nothing. Because she lives in a relatively small town, Marcela never has the gift of anonymity. When she finally tries to "get out" for a little while, Tony and his friends see her, and Tony's wounded masculinity leads him to kill her. Because his friends have seen her, he feels that he has to kill her or lose face among his friends who will think him effeminate.

In this case, it's not only men who patrol Marcela's behavior but the other women in the town act as surrogates for her mother and husband. Ruiz comments that in small towns, "relatives and neighbors kept close watch over adolescent women and quickly reported any suspected indiscretions [...] women in cities had a distinct advantage over their rural peers in that they could venture miles from their neighborhood into the anonymity of dance halls" (*From* 59). The entire town expects Marcela to misbehave; she's already marked by the circumstances of her birth, her mother, and her loneliness. The narrative itself prefigures Marcela's downfall by linking her imagined transgressions

to her mother's open sexuality. The title, "Macaria's Daughter" brands her already as sexually transgressive, and the description of her circumstances, "The neighbors would not speak to her, although they talked about her in loud voices whenever she ventured outside. They knew who she was, Macaria's daughter" (30), assumes that it is only a matter of time before she loses her status of a good wife. The early marriage does not liberate Marcela. She mostly remains a child, reading comic books and longing to go out of the house. The community policing of her actions, especially with regard to her family history, suggest that she's not paying for her own sins when Tony kills her; instead, she pays for her mother's sexual past.

The eagerness to get rid of Marcela plays into the sexual myth Norma Alarcón describes: "As long as we [Mexican American women] continue to be seen in that way [open to sexual exploitation] we are earmarked to be abusable matter, not just by men of another culture, but all cultures including the one that breeds us" (205). Marcela's mother beats her for social mobility, and Tony kills her for wanting "to get out" (32). Of course, the question is get out of what? The social dictates that say if a woman goes out she must be sexually deviant? The prison of a home with only the Virgin of Guadalupe for company? The silence? And yet, she says, "I was sorry afterwards! I swear!" (32). Getting out is not a possibility. Therefore, the historical conditions that shape Marcela's appearance lead to the assumption that she is sexually exploitable by men within her community as well as the Anglo law enforcement that arrive after her death.

The murder itself marks Marcela's body and affects how the police react to her position. When the police arrive, they find her body hacked up. The police initially think Tony tried to cut her head off, but then they agree that he spent longer cutting her breasts

off. The attempt to decapitate her does not work, yet he can cut off representations of her sexuality, suggesting again that Marcela's transgression is her desire to be outside the home. Her body becomes an object for the police to gaze upon: "The youngest of the policemen was looking at the woman's thighs, which her tattered skirt did not wholly cover. They were white and incongruously whole. „Gosh," he said, „she must have been pretty" (24-25). Again, other people objectify Marcela, and reinforce Alarcón's extended critique of the myth of the sexually available woman, "woman is sexually passive, and hence at all times open to potential use by men whether it be seduction or rape [...] the use of her as a pawn may be intracultural, „amongst us guys," or intercultural, which means if we are not using her then „they" must be using her. Since woman is seen as highly pawnable, nothing she does is perceived as a choice" (205). Certainly, Marcela has been objectified and silenced, first by her husband and then by Anglo law enforcement. The male gaze (from Tony as well as the police) sees her as simultaneously deviant and desirable, white and off-white,<sup>14</sup> culpable and childlike. Even though all of these contradictions are in one woman, Paredes leaves little room for women to exist outside of these binaries.

An alternative reading that would ascribe some power to Marcela has roots in the possibilities that emerge from silenced voices in the narrative. Female agency comes through in the narrative. First, even though Macaria enacts woman on woman violence toward her daughter, she symbolizes a possibility for Mexican resistance to Anglo domination. Her husband's name is Sam Polk, which implicates him in the conquest of Texas and hero Sam Houston as well as the US Mexico War President James Polk. Her silencing of and domination over him challenges Anglo-Mexican relations, in that he

seems to be set up as a benevolent step-father to Marcela, but his impotence reveals how inadequate the myth of benign conquest of Mexican territory is. The Mexican American Macaria attempts to dominate her Anglo husband and mestiza daughter, but she succumbs to upholding the status quo (and exemplifying an internal colonialism model turned inward) through her treatment of them both. By leaving her mother's home, Marcela gains some agency, but she cannot escape the sexual mores her mother flaunted; the other women in the town police her behavior as well, gossiping about her for being Macaria's daughter. Meanwhile, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe stands in for her innocence and mistreatment. As a symbol of female agency, the Virgin is weak (except for recent recovery work that suggests her connection to the Aztec goddess,<sup>15</sup> which would support a reading of power in Marcela's mestiza identity). Additionally, this virgin/whore dichotomy in the story provides irony and questions why women necessarily fall into one category or another, but moreover, because Paredes cannot write a real way out of this double bind for women, it suggests an underlying misogyny in league with the Anglo law enforcement. In other words, Paredes is holding all Mexican American women responsible for sleeping with the enemy—in this case, Sam Polk.

The second possibility that Marcela has agency is apparent in the following discussion of the coroner. One of the Anglo police officers cannot tear himself away from Marcela's body, and the coroner comments, “,You should have seen her mother when she was young’” (32). This line suggests that the coroner had a relationship with Macaria, and because Marcela's father is unknown, but white, it's possible he is gazing at his daughter's mutilated body. This suggestion creates a situation that makes Anglo law enforcement complicit with the mistreatment of the Mexican American body politic,

especially as it denies domestic violence as a social justice problem, but it goes further to show how interracial relationships in South Texas have created mestiza identities unrecognized by the Anglo establishment. Marcela's claim to whiteness is not recognized by law enforcement, but nevertheless, it exists in her pretty "white skin" (28). This claim to whiteness might have given Marcela some sort of power; instead, it again suggests the text's underlying misogyny with regard to Mexican American women and Anglo men. Marcela's limited agency comes from her desire to know more, to "get out," but Paredes largely forecloses female agency in "Macaria's Daughter."

If Paredes uses domestic violence to tame female agency in the short story, in *George Washington Gómez*, he inadvertently opens the possibility of Chicana activism. The protagonist, Guálinto finds that emergent Chicana feminism creates a nationalist identity that he is too uncomfortable with to embrace. Rather, he becomes a pocho vendido, selling out his people for the Anglo war establishment. This text, written between 1936 and 1940, takes place along the Texas border. Guálinto/George grows up with his two sisters, Maruca and Carmen, his mother, and his uncle after his father is killed by Texas Rangers. As Leif Sorensen notes, the novel's setting is particularly important because "the struggle between Anglotexans and Mexicotexans has become less obvious, because U.S. nationalism has successfully domesticated the border, foreclosing criticism of the imperialist violence that made Mexicotexans U.S. subjects" (121). George/Guálinto seems to believe that the only way to get ahead is to collude with the US military and marry a white woman. However, his sisters embody a different kind of resistance that stems from their reaction to the mother beating one of the sisters. A gender analysis of the novel's scene of domestic violence is particularly appropriate for

understanding how women become other in the text. I'll argue that in this scene, the protagonist sees his mother and sister as cultural betrayers, but that ultimately the novel assigns the real cultural treason to Guálinto.

Like most of the other texts in this chapter, this scene of domestic violence stems ostensibly from efforts to police women's sexual identities but actually reveals anxieties about social change for women and internal colonization. Guálinto comes home to find Carmen crying on the couch while she waits. He thinks she's overly emotional and silly, until Maruca and her mother return from the doctor where it has been confirmed that Maruca is pregnant. Guálinto has no idea that pregnancy was even a possibility for Maruca. In this scenario, the mother acts as enforcer, following Maruca into the back room where she begins to beat her with a barrel stave. As Héctor Pérez persuasively argues, the mother "functions [...] as a vessel that conveys problematic patriarchal values and assumptions" (39). But this is not sufficient to explain Guálinto's cultural shame and betrayal, a talent Pérez attributes to the mother's actions. Since an unmarried daughter presented a community example of lax chaperonage, the mother must reassert control over the family. Because the mother sees the family's future success as dependent on Guálinto, she beats Maruca as a way of protecting his social status.

The narrative exposes the brutality of the beating, but through it all, Guálinto is not only impotent—he is clueless: "Guálinto followed them, fascinated, to the Room" (223). The Room, where Guálinto's uncle, Feliciano, lives when he stays with the family contains stacks of beans and corn, signifying that even during the Depression, this family, by virtue of the uncle's farming and land outside of town, will not go hungry. The Room exists first and foremost though because the Texas Rangers killed Guálinto's father.

Feliciano lives with the family because they need a man at the head of the house.

Maruca's lack of shame at being pregnant even though she is not married challenges the assumption of needing a male head of household. She wants to protect the baby and believes she (like her mother) can raise a child alone. If the family does not need a male head, Feliciano becomes extraneous except for his earning potential. Guálinto, as a feminized subject is less a man than his sister, Carmen. However, Feliciano still gives the family status. The Room marks them as land-owing and relatively well off at the beginning of the Depression.<sup>16</sup> What this means is that Maruca does not have to work; her work becomes a symbol of economic liberation. The Room also serves to remove Maruca from the house; she has brought shame on the family through her sexual (employment) transgressions. Sexual liberation and economic liberation often go hand in hand for women. In this case (and many of the others) violence comes with the excuse of punishing sexual liberation, but for most of these writers, the women's unforgivable crime is working outside the home.

Guálinto views his mother's speech as a betrayal of her femininity. The description of her linguistic transgressions makes her a cultural traitor, even as she enforces cultural codes on Maruca:

Maruca crouched close to the floor, seeking to protect her belly. And the blows went on, the horrible thudding and cracking, and the two women cursing, panting, grunting, pleading. [...] The animal sounds coming from his sister filled him with a crushing sense of shame. But it was his mother who sickened him the most. He had never heard her curse before. Nor had he ever thought whether or not she knew about such words. If he had done so, he would have stopped thinking about

it immediately, with a sense of impropriety and defilement. Now these words were pouring out of her mouth like a stream of filth. (224)

In Guálinto's ears, the women become two animals with their panting and grunting. This sound image leads to a visceral reaction in Guálinto, wherein he wants to "rub desperately at her lips, to make them soft and gentle again" (224). He cannot stand the idea that his mother (the Virgin figure) could be so transformed by his sister (the whore). This dichotomy, which Paredes also invokes in "Macaria's Daughter," makes both women whores by the behavior of one. Encountering and disciplining Maruca forces the mother to lose her venerated position. She becomes a traitor to motherhood, femininity, the Virgin, and Guálinto. She has transformed into a harpy of sorts, with her "low bestial sound deep inside her throat" and the "nervous claw" of her hand (224). Interestingly, Guálinto is not disgusted with Maruca's pregnancy or the beating itself; rather the vision of his mother transformed is what causes him to be ill. An alternative reading to this would suggest that the mother is trying to protect traditional, cultural values, but even in this reading the mother seems to go too far with regard to the acceptable modes of punishment within the family. This domestic violence, the transformation of women through the capitalist, sexually liberated Anglo influence, causes Guálinto's distance from his family. In this way, the narrative blames women for Guálinto's transformation into soldier-spy, husband to a white daughter of a Texas Ranger, and cultural vendido.

Before he transforms, though, Guálinto undergoes a feminizing shift in perspective. "Guálinto summoned enough courage to look into the storeroom" (224); "His stomach tried to vomit but his throat would not let it. He put his hand on the wall to steady himself and looked up drunkenly" (225); "Guálinto sank back on his pillow, weak



and trembling” (226). In his discussion of Paredes’s poetry, Ben Olguín maintains “Paredes resists the reification of the Mexican American subject as the hypermasculinist regional figure who looms significant in his later scholarship [...] he invokes the problematic trope of the tragic mestizo to illustrate how the ambiguous ontological space occupied by Mexican Americans is embedded with layers of material history” (122). This same sentiment applies to the novel. The layers of material history that position the family as middle-class, and in George’s case, upwardly mobile, also restrict the hypermasculine subject. Guálinto literally cannot stomach the violence, and when he accidentally kills someone later in the novel, he cannot come to terms with the murder of a kinsman. Instead, he turns to a less physically confrontational form of violence, choosing to undermine his friends’ fight for civil rights by spying on them for the United States government.

The circumstances of Maruca’s pregnancy reveal social and historical conditions for Mexican American young people in South Texas in the 1930s. Employment and educational opportunities frame the social status of Maruca, Carmen, and Guálinto. Ruiz shows that those women “who challenged or circumvented chaperonage held a full-time job” (*From* 63). Because Maruca’s job puts her in public space, the mother blames the job for Maruca’s pregnancy, which causes her to forbid Carmen’s continued employment. She does not worry, however, about Guálinto’s job (even though George’s employment ultimately is the most compromising for the family). While Carmen does not protest the prohibition, it is a double blow for her, since she has already had to give up her education so Guálinto can continue his. Even though she has been disempowered in multiple ways, Carmen studies on her own and will emerge as a well-balanced Chicana

presence. Carmen, by leaving school, furthers her own education, increasing her literacy by reading magazines about far off places and telling these stories to her mother. Her education does something for her community; she increases knowledge for the women around her. Guálinto's education, which the family assumed would help them more than the girls' educations, ends up being used against the Mexican American community. The subtext of this detail suggests that women's education is more valuable for the community and should not be neglected.

Through the entire scene of violence Guálinto can only watch and cower. He is feminized by his lack of response. His passive reaction contrasts with Carmen's active mediation; she cleans Maruca up, prepares food, and acts as a "liaison between the different members of the family" because she "seemed less affected by the tense atmosphere than the others" (227). Indeed Carmen takes on the role of the head of the family, working to heal the wounds and create a community in which they can thrive. She shores up community building and family ties. However, because the family has achieved middle class status, when Carmen marries a darker man and has children with him, it complicates George's feelings about her. Even though she had been his favorite sister, and the sister who was capable of and should have gotten the education over Guálinto, her marriage is cultural betrayal in his eyes. Acuña describes the Mexican American middle class of the 1930s as color conscious and comments "Aside from „marrying up“ by marrying someone lighter or with more economic resources, over time being American became a form of moving up while retaining a Mexican identity, yet adopting many middle-class values of Euroamericans" (258). Because Carmen is content with her mother and children, she creates a viable community for the family, and through these

connections she retains land and power. Unlike Guálinto/George who leaves and returns uninterested in land, she rejects what Olguín calls Paredes's "antithetical citizen"—he who is by virtue of "cruel circular logic [...] that links land ownership to civic legitimacy [...] is the embodiment of underdevelopment that enables the new capitalist empire to thrive" (124). Carmen, not Guálinto, becomes the hero of the people by preserving the link to the land for Mexican Americans in South Texas.

Instead of working for his community and family, Guálinto/George moves away and returns only as a spy to betray his community. Christopher Schedler comments with regard to the *corrido* tradition, "The most symbolically charged moments are those of violent confrontation of individuals who stand iconically for the conflicting world views of the Anglo and Mexican-American communities" (157). Certainly, in the narrative, the violent confrontation that Guálinto cannot stomach leads to a triumph of Carmen who creates a Chicana family from scratch. Guálinto can no longer be the "man of the house" because he has never had the wherewithal to fulfill his desired destiny "to be a great man who will help his people"; rather he is more likely to fulfill the sarcastically suggested role "to be a great man among the Gringos" (Paredes 16). This is the reason his mother gives for letting Guálinto continue his studies. Never mind that his education is largely a waste. Sorenson points out that Guálinto's resistance is directed against a Tejana (Miss Cornelia, a bad teacher who does not support Mexican American children's educations), so that "the masculinist bias of the *corrido* tradition allows gender difference to stand in for the racial difference that would otherwise separate the hero from the object of his violence" (129). Again, Paredes directs violence at Mexican American women for selling out their people.

Education is a site of resistance in the novel, which reflects historical conditions of the time. The segregated schools are one reason that Guálinto directs his aggression toward Mexican American women, and even though the family takes segregation as a fact in the novel, Tejanos protested segregated schools. For instance, in 1910, Mexican Americans in San Angelo had protested segregation by “withholding their children from the school census, thus denying state aid to the school district” (Acuña 172). The 1920s brought increased segregation and charges that “Mexican Americans were slow learners” yet, they “scored 70 percent higher on IQ tests administered in Spanish” (193). Desegregation cases mark LULAC’s early commitment to civil rights. The classrooms at Guálinto’s school enforce segregation and reveal that the room for Mexican Americans, like Steele describes “Mexican schools” in general, was “a dumping ground for less-competent teachers” (“Mexican” 14). However, rather than fight the system that allows this inequality, Guálinto attacks his teacher, revealing his impotence in the face of marginalization. Guálinto cannot be true to himself, because his name contains too many contradictions. Roumiana Velikova sees the novel as pointing “to the violence inherent in U.S. history and the frustrated, ultimately self-destructive, tendencies it engenders in the protagonist, who was reared in the corrido tradition of active, often violent, resistance to Anglo domination” (35). Because there is no place for Guálinto to release physical violence against the Anglo (and really we should doubt his ability to do this even if he has location to), he instead turns covert violence on his family and community.

Guálinto’s position as a spy, married to a white woman, solidifies his cultural betrayal. He in effect has reentered the domicile of his people in order to do them violence. He is sickened by the physical violence he sees in his home, but he brings

imperialist violence to the border under the auspices of his successful education. Yet as Parikh points out in discussing how Paredes and *George Washington Gómez* embody challenges in minority discourse “self-representation became both possible and treacherous, as the minority cultural worker attempted to enter a social terrain that remained highly uneven despite claims by the dominant culture of an already accomplished equality” (269). George embraces his new role even as he derides Carmen and her dark children. But the narrative betrays the potential that exists for Carmen and the others on the border. As Pérez seeks to resolve Guálinto’s failure to be a great man among his people, he notes that there “is certainly a sense of hopelessness in the novel—at least as far as radical social and political change for the border community—the novel’s narrative consciousness does seem to seek out promising characters and potential subplots [...] a core Chicano/a group remained in Jonesville and attempts to cultivate organic roots and empower the community” (42). He is specifically speaking about Guálinto’s former friends, but I argue that Carmen, as storyteller and mother of dark children, also foreshadows the hope of a powerful Chicana presence.

The possibility of an emergent Chicana feminism in opposition to the effeminized *vendido* man appears even more obviously in José Antonio Villarreal’s *Pocho*. The novel has fallen under heavy criticism for being the first Chicano novel as the start of the Chicano intellectual movement, but, at the same time, not being Chicano enough. As Ramón Saldívar explains, “*Pocho* has always been somewhat of an embarrassment to Chicanos [...] seen as assimilationist tendencies, indicating an uncritical acceptance of „melting pot“ theories of American immigration” (65). Originally published in 1959, the novel predates the upheaval of the Chicano civil rights movement, but it engages

changing social roles for women. However, much of the focus on how *Pocho* falls short is centered on the failure of the protagonist, Richard Rubio, to fulfill his coming of age into a Chicano identity. Instead, he joins the navy and plans on never coming back.

Thomas Vallejos notes that the failure of the coming of age ritual in *Pocho* means that “the final outcome of the novel is the undermining of Chicano family and community ties” (6). Other criticism of the novel focuses on its perceived misogyny. Alma Rosa Alvarez comments, “Because preservation of [manhood and nationalism] in the United States is often done through the subordination of women, the women in [*Pocho*] were depicted as weak, static characters who at best were obstacles, and at worst traitors to a Chicano nationalist movement” (5). I will argue that the scene of domestic violence toward the end of the novel does undermine male privilege, and the novel itself actually, inadvertently affirms *Chicana* family and community ties.

Set just before World War II in California, the zoot suit riots and pachuco culture play an important role in the novel, as Richard hangs out with pachucos, and his ability to code switch in pachuco slang keeps him out of trouble. Later, Richard joins the army as a rejection of pachuco lifestyle. His sister, Luz, also seems to embrace pachuco behavior as she, like other pachucas, “challenges wartime gender norms by venturing into the public sphere” (Ramírez “Crimes” 11). The backdrop of emergent pachuco culture sheds light on the conflict between Luz and the men in her family.

Two significant scenes of domestic violence occur in the novel as first Richard and later his father, Juan Rubio, attempt to physically impose and police sexual and social mores with regard to Richard’s sister, Luz. She and her boyfriend drive up in front of the family’s house in her boyfriend’s car. Richard goes out to meet them and demands that

Luz to go inside and clean the “filthy” house. Already here, there are social mores present that Luz must attend to. Her boyfriend does not speak Spanish, so he does not understand Richard’s dictate. Luz uses this to her advantage to start a fight between her brother and her boyfriend. She tells her boyfriend that Richard is trying to keep them apart; when he asks what Richard wants, she lies, “„He don’t want me to be out here with you”” (147). Her boyfriend threatens Richard by being “big, powerful” but when Richard “[takes] a brick from an abandoned incinerator” the boyfriend backs off (147). Luz resorts to wits, like many of the women I have already described, when she uses her linguistic power to control her circumstances. She, like Malinche, is in a position to translate for the non-native speaker, but when she translates, she does so to benefit herself. Her translation keeps Richard away from the house; moreover, it shows how she uses the English-speaker for her own gain. Luz resists the patriarchal domination of her home life by using her power of speech to manipulate the situation.

The novel focuses on how women (especially Richard’s mother) have failed to maintain domestic cleanliness and expectations. The rebellion of women and the mess in the home becomes an allegory for the changing social roles and opportunities for women. Her refusal to keep a clean house echoes the scenario of “Las comadres,” making women responsible for the home and consequently deserving of domestic violence. In *Pocho* the domestic squalor reveals tensions over the place of Mexican Americans within the larger social fabric of the United States during World War II. As Catherine Ramírez points out, “Although many pachucas may have labored on behalf of their families inside and/or outside the home, they also nurtured „a separate culture” distinctive from that of their parents. In doing so, they appeared to privilege individual desires over the family”’s

survival (as well as the nation's survival" ("Crimes" 12). Luz and Consuelo (Richard's mother) threaten the family and community, and as wayward Mexican American women, they threaten the very nation. Domestic violence, then, becomes a tool to keep them in line, and it serves the purposes of the male family members as well as the perceived assimilationist agenda of the Mexican American generation. Becoming a member of the army, Richard aligns with the US soldiers and sailors in the zoot suit riots, enacting domestic violence on Mexican American men as well as women.

The second instance of domestic violence is much more brutal and more telling. Richard comes home from his own sexual dalliance to find his father beating Luz for the suggestion of impropriety; she comes home at three in the morning. He accuses her of being a whore, but she tells him, "If I'm a whore, it is having your blood that makes me one!" (165). She references the double standard that turns women into whores for sexual liberation but excuses men's behavior as simply part of being a man. What makes him most angry though is her insistence that the father is no longer in control of the home. When Luz attempts to stop her father from shifting the beating to her mother, she accuses Richard of weakness: "„Stand there! Just stand there, you weak bastard, and watch this son of a bitch hit your mother!" (166). She flings herself at Juan Rubio, but "very deliberately he hit her in the face with his fist. She did not get up" (166). He hits her in the face to silence her—to silence her challenges to his male privilege and to Richard's masculinity. Because she is knocked out and no one stops to tend to her, she does not see her father begin to destroy the house with an axe, but her presence looms like a shadow over the subsequent events. Furthermore, her name, Luz (Light), is significant here. Juan



Rubio has attempted to knock the family's (and especially the women's) lights out, but soon Luz gets up by herself and claims her own space.

Meanwhile Richard cannot act; he's "transfixed by the grotesque masque that was taking place before his eyes" (and it's a masque because "he did not know any of these people") (166). When Juan Rubio begins to destroy the house, Richard "held on to the kicking legs of his father, and when he was shaken off and they were both on their feet, his father hit him a chopping blow" (167), but he cannot convince his father to stop. Finally he "jumped on his father's back, only to slip off, and as he fell his head struck the floor, knocking him unconscious" (167). Juan Rubio immediately stops what he's doing, and carries Richard to another room, tends to him, and sobs about his son. Several things are important about this order of events. Richard behaves like a child, grabbing at his father's legs, and in the end Juan Rubio carries him like a baby from the room. Richard cannot become the man of the house, because he is unwilling (or unable) to give up his role as a child. When Richard is knocked unconscious, the family stops to take note. He is delicate and cannot get up on his own. The contrast to the family's reaction when Luz is knocked unconscious moments before is striking. Finally the father and son reconcile and realize that the father must leave the family. Rather than say goodbye to Consuelo, Luz, or the other girls, Juan Rubio says goodbye to the only one who matters, Richard: "They put their arms around each other in the Mexican way. Then Juan Rubio kissed his son on the mouth" (169). This scene feminizes the Mexican American male body, especially the body that goes to war and does not come back.

Meanwhile, "In the other room, Luz finally picked herself up off the floor and disappeared into her room" (169). Her father is leaving for good, and she has no use for

him. Furthermore, she does not need assistance to pick herself up, and when she disappears into her room, it is as if she's found a room of her own. The Chicana presence might be easily lost in the tearful goodbye between father and son, but Luz, who had been knocked unconscious is able to restore herself. Women's agency and the feminization of Richard have solidified the new order in the Rubio home. Catherine Ramírez argues, "Chicanas' silence can be and has been as oppositional, rich, and complex as their male counterparts' speech" ("Sayin'" 3). Certainly, Luz's silent, unheralded rising is complex and oppositional. She is powerful in her own right and signals the strength and resilience of the family she and her mother have made. Her emergent Chicana identity stems from her refusal to participate in the racist, militarist, and sexist maligning of the pachuca. The narrative's inability to contain her signifies how the Chicana identity is oppositional. Ramírez points out that the male pachuco has been revived as a political identity, but the pachuca remains "unintelligible to Chicano cultural nationalism" ("Crimes" 24). Because Luz embodies oppositional identities with regard to gender, race, class, and nation, her character must reject charges of cultural betrayal and establish a new domestic order.

Juan Rubio and Richard reveal how impotent they are as they attempt to police Luz's behavior. In the pages before the confrontation with Luz, both Richard and Juan Rubio prey on the same young Mexican girl, describing her as "slight, yet breasty, with good legs, and dark. And he [Richard] thought her pretty, because to a Mexican swarthinness means beauty" (165). The sexual codes that they impose on Luz do not hold up in the larger community of Mexican Americans because while they attempt to enforce these codes in their family, both father and son actively dismantle the codes in their sexual affairs. However, the perspective in the novel suggests that Luz operates under her

own code, refusing to tell her father where she has been and where she is going. She asserts her independence as a harbinger of Chicana feminism.

Based on this reading, when Richard joins the navy and leaves his family home it is not a failure of the Chicano family; rather his actions signal a shift to Chicana feminism. Richard's reliance on the old ways does not suit the time and place that his mother and sisters inhabit. His presence asserts the old equation of war and violence with masculinity and power. Yet, as he leaves, it is not so much a literal death wish, as Ramón Saldivar explains, "he welcomes a figural one: the death of the child he was, at the mercy of random historical forces and of determinant social codes" (67). Saldivar's interpretation supports my analysis that Richard's impotence in the family is part of the recognition that, as the favored male child, his very presence continues dominant social codes that are inherently problematic and violent. Indeed, as Ben Olguín suggests, "Mexican American soldiers are both active agents and subjects of a nation that in large part is built upon a war of expansion and conquest against their ancestors, and that subsequently consolidates its status as the premier capitalist imperialist power [...through...] heroics of Mexican American GIs" (110). Therefore, his enlistment and acknowledgement that he will not come back signifies surrender to the capitalist imperialist US power.<sup>17</sup> Women then are left to resist US policy on the home front. However, Richard's sacrifice is meaningful because the post-war period led to leadership opportunities for Mexican Americans and as José Arranda claims, "By the 1950s, the archetypal Mexican family that had taken flight from the Revolution to settle, however precariously, in the United States was now gone but not forgotten. For this postwar generation, the future had a history" (160). In many ways, the future is allowed to reject

that history, by rejecting domestic violence and restrictive social roles for women. Luz represents a new mode—one that equates power with independence and connections with other women.

Timothy S. Sedore argues, “Each of Villarreal’s novelistic protagonists takes up a lone search for fulfillment, shunning others, leading no one. [...] Family institutions [...] are fractured” (243-44). To support this claim, he notes that Richard’s mother and sisters have “already set an independent course” (244). While certainly Richard disengages from his family, the family is by no means defunct. Consuelo expects Richard to stay and become the “head” of the family (a role he rejects), but Ruiz points out that as teenagers “did not always acquiesce in the boundaries set down for them by their elders” both young women and men rebelled (*From* 54). In this case, Luz’s public behavior, more than Richard’s, sets a new course for the family. Richard’s sisters and mother have emerged as new standard bearers for a Chicana identity—one that frightens the men in the novel. The narrative is deeply anxious about the changing roles of women, and since Richard cannot adapt to the new social norms, he exiles himself from this reality into a masculine playground of war.

These scenes of domestic violence blame women for the violence as they define Mexican American women’s behavior—impudence, bad housekeeping, and sexually promiscuity all initially rationalize violence. However, even through violence toward women, the male protagonists cannot halt the changing social mores that the Mexican Revolution and World War II brought. In three of these narratives, an emergent Chicana voice picks herself up and moves into her own space. Domestic violence in these narratives signals that the patriarchal model for the family cannot hold under the looming

pressures. National changes in women's economic and educational conditions are reflected in domestic environments. Even as men writing about domestic violence blamed women for the social conditions surrounding violence, they inadvertently created space for female characters to metaphorically pick themselves up—in the process gaining power and agency from their own actions. The implications of this space are enormous because even in texts that seem to be misogynistic, women prevail, not through some innate femininity but through cleverness, resorting to wits, or sheer will.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> An exact date for the sketch doesn't exist, but Jesus and Netty Rodríguez performed in San Antonio in the 1920s through to New York in the 1940s (Kanellos *A History* 438-39).

<sup>2</sup> Rafael de la Fuente's 1919 report as a Mexican railroad official condemns the treatment the bracero workers received. From having money stolen, being lied to, and experiencing raised rates for food and lodging, the worker is assaulted on every side (Rosales 84-85).

1921 in Los Angeles, a greater percentage of Mexican women were able to speak English than Mexican men (Sánchez in Ruiz 256).

<sup>4</sup> Recall the patriarchs in *The Squatter and the Don* and *The Californians* who blame their deaths on the unfairness of the invading Anglo law and Congress.

<sup>5</sup> There is a fascinating scene of performed domestic violence in Daniel Venegas's 1928 *The Adventures of Don Chipote; or, When Parrots Breastfeed*. Doña Chipota finally finds her husband in LA where he is singing in a variety show. She rushes the stage and begins to berate (and beat) him for not coming back home to Mexico. The audience thinks the "performance" is hysterical...until the couple's multiple offspring also appear on stage to compel their father to come home. With the children's arrival, the scene ceases to be a couple "who so brilliantly portrayed the comedy of husband and wife" and instead becomes a tragedy for which members of the audience call the police to have the Chipotes hauled off to jail and deported. Here, domestic violence is comedic and performative, like it is in "I'm Going to Mexico." The threat of Anglo interference results in jail and deportation. Most important though, is the sense of audience. The mostly Mexican American expatriate audience finds moral and comedic lessons in the performance that by the end restores social dignity to the audience if not to the performers.

<sup>6</sup> This woman blaming excuse appears again in *Pocho* when Richard justifies violence against his mother and sisters as a result of their slovenly housekeeping. This "reason" for domestic violence overtly blames women for problems within the home. As part of the domestic sphere, a messy house becomes a symbol for squalor in the nation. Men, and other women, punish women for "allowing" their homes to get out of order.

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<sup>7</sup> The impulse to control Anastacia could also reflect allegorically on Chicana feminists as the piece is published in *Con Safos* in 1969 as Chicana feminists were becoming more vocal. As an closing for a letter, *Con Safos* means “with respect” and protects the words. Because it is the venue for this story, *Con Safos* allegorically protects Suárez’s words from Chicana feminists’ deconstruction and charges of misogyny.

<sup>8</sup> Sandra Cisneros’s short story, “Minerva Writes Poems” complements this thought contrast. Minerva’s husband is controlling and abusive, but as the neighbor/narrator observes, “That night he comes back and sends a big rock through the window. Then he is sorry and she opens the door again. Same story. Next week she comes over black and blue and asks what can she do? Minerva. I don’t know which way she’ll go. There’s nothing *I* can do.” Here again, no one wants to interfere in what seems to be a private, domestic problem/arrangement.

<sup>9</sup> In the next chapter, I explore how motherwork as a response to domestic violence empowers Chicanas politically and socially.

<sup>10</sup> The name Mac evokes Irish “otherness” and claims to whiteness. Social mobility and positions of economic and legal power depend on an ethnic group’s ability to define itself, in this case, the Irish identity remains in a name, but the position of power he occupies over the people living in the barrio ensures his status.

<sup>11</sup> Sandra Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek,” discussed in the next chapter, offers striking similarities to this story, with a man who sobs at beating his wife, a woman who marries young, themes of leaving the family’s house for an man’s house, and a reversal of woman on woman violence. In many ways, she rewrites this story to empower the victimized woman.

<sup>12</sup> As I’ll show with Guálinto and Richard in the following texts, the crisis of masculinity in the face of violence supports a reading of the text as an allegory for US violence on the Mexican American body politic that renders Mexican American men victims of their own violence.

<sup>13</sup> Like Amy Kaplan suggests that white women have to maintain their control over other’s behavior in order to keep the Anglo place in a racial, gendered hierarchy, the border women in this narrative have to have their virtue affirmed in order to maintain their own sense of power over women like Macaria and her daughter.

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<sup>14</sup> I use Laura Gómez's term here to suggest that Marcela is white enough for the Anglo men to desire her, but not white enough for them to empathize with her. She says, "Mexican's status as a racially mixed group both made it possible for some Mexicans to occupy an „off-white“ position and for the group overall to be classified as an inferior „mongrel“ race" (59).

<sup>15</sup> See Jeanette Rodríguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Father and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1994, and Ana Castillo, ed. *Goddess of the Americas: Writing on the Virgin of Guadalupe*. New York, Riverhead Books, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> As John-Michael Rivera explains, Feliciano's understanding of taking care of the family and helping Guálinto realize his potential "entails leaving his radical past behind him and becoming a successful, middle-class member of the community" (158). So when his land in Texas is prosperous, it is against all odds. Agriculture profits suffered after World War I, when competition returned. The Texas Cotton Acreage Control Law of 1931 and the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 conspired to remove tenant farmers (mostly Mexican American) from their land. Natural disasters and technological innovations also challenged Mexican American farmers (Acuña 223-24). Because Feliciano owns the farm in his own right, he is able to avoid some of these disasters and continue to provide for the family.

<sup>17</sup> And if he does come back, as a member of the *navy* specifically, he will be torn with the zoot suit riots that pitted Mexican American young people against the sailors in Los Angeles port.



## Chapter Five: Mother Works: Domestic Violence Globalized

While some of these texts in the last chapter closed off possibilities for women's agency, others suggested that a family without a man at the "head" functions more productively to ensure cultural survival. Freeing themselves from the threat of domestic violence, women can engage in radical forms of activism as they counter the patriarchal impetus to restrain women's movement and agency. In this chapter, I turn my attention to more recent literature by women. These novels and short stories more explicitly discuss the social problem of domestic violence, but here the structures that lead to domestic violence have roots in patriarchy, imperialism, and capitalism. As the writers create space for women to recover from domestic violence, they point to motherwork as type of empowerment for women and men who have been victimized by the power imbalances in the globalized world.

The concept of motherwork, as discussed by Patricia Hill Collins with regard to women of color, usefully provides a way of thinking about domestic violence within the context of mothering, reproduction, and globalization. For instance, women who are expected by their communities to educate, care for, nurture, and discipline in the face of colonial oppression and racism perform radical motherwork that, as Collins argues, "challenges social constructions of work and family as separate spheres, of male and female gender roles as similarly dichotomized, and of the search for autonomy as the guiding human quest" (47). However, when domestic violence threatens motherwork, women must and do react with their own forms of resistance. Domestic violence, doubly constructed, represents violence from intimate partners or violence from the state that

threatens women's communities on local, national, and hemispheric levels. This chapter argues that within the texts presented, reproduction and motherwork spur women to resistance and action when they react to domestic violence.

For instance, the short story "If It Weren't for the Honeysuckle..." by Estela Portillo Trambley (1990) is a good example of how motherwork occurs as a reaction to domestic violence. The story is set in a small village in northern Mexico and focuses on Beatriz who marries an abusive man, Robles, to escape her abusive family only to discover that he has "wives" in every pueblo. When she bores him, he leaves her on a plot of empty land, and she proceeds to build a house with her own hands. Over the years, he visits and occasionally brings other "wives" to stay with her. As the story opens, Sofia, who is child-like and utterly dependent on Beatriz and terrified of Robles, had been brought to Beatriz years earlier, as Robles took her as another "wife"—a punching bag and rapable object. In the beginning, Beatriz and Sofia are expecting him that evening, and they are discussing what they should do with the young girl, Lucretia, he had left with them the last time he visited. They know he will beat and rape her as well, so Beatriz arranges to hide her in the village church while Robles is in town. Because he murdered someone in the village long ago, he's not at liberty to go there. Once Lucretia is safely out of the way, Beatriz and Sofia plot to kill Robles. They successfully execute the plan despite Sofia's fear, and Maria Herrera-Sobek sums the resolution up nicely: "The dangerous violent male principle is eliminated and the women live together in harmony with nature, each other and the cosmos" (253).

Beatriz does motherwork in response to Robles's abuse. She refers to Lucretia as "our child" (247), and she resorts to wits to keep her safe. By sending her to the church,

even though she does not believe in the power of God, Beatriz prevents the repeat of the “rape of Lucretia.” The child’s name is not accidental, and in one line of the story Beatriz asks Sofia, “You rather he rape Lucretia?” (246) in a clear echo of the play *The Rape of Lucretia*. The myth, in which a raped Lucretia kills herself at the end, hangs over the story and shows how important it is that the women succeed in preventing any further abuse from Robles. Beatriz’s motherwork pays off when the mushrooms she stews for Robles work their magic. She, Sofia, and Lucretia will now have their own home, complete with honeysuckle and a singing river (237). As the story negates the rape of Lucretia, the singing river negates the myth of La Llorona—the mother who drowns her children and haunts bodies of water, and Beatriz is able to save her (adopted) child from the ravages of violence.

Finally, Beatriz dreams for a better life for all the women in the house she built. She promises Sofia, “This house, it’s our haven, our peace, our order, a place to raise our girl, to see her go to school, even make a good marriage” (244). She is confident that with Robles out of the picture, they can prosper. Beatriz has learned how to survive—first by caring for babies in the fields and serving as a maid to her brothers; then by reading and building; and finally by not being afraid to kill for her own survival. She reveals that when she was building the house, a wealthy patron in the city had raped her repeatedly. She had been trying to earn money to build her house, but she loved his library and would sneak around to read. The patron discovered her reading and “grabbed the book from [her] and hit [her] across the face” (249). In response to his abuse, Beatriz refused to help him when he had a heart attack while raping her. Instead, she removed all the books in his library to her own house upon his death. She fashions her motherwork as education,

resistance, and protection. Having land, books, and safety make her a powerful mother figure for Lucretia and Sofia. Metaphorical motherhood can create motherwork.

For Chicanas, the pressure to mother is intense. As Gloria Anzaldúa explains, “Educated or not, the onus is still on woman to be a wife/mother—only the nun can escape motherhood” (39). While I don’t want in any way to imply in this chapter that women (especially Chicanas) have to be mothers to define themselves or achieve feminist credibility, the fictional women in these texts are partially defined by their motherhood; furthermore, their feminist reactions to domestic violence depend on their identities as mothers (but also in some ways as daughters, sisters, and friends). Because a traditional role in the family for Chicanas has been to pass cultural values along to children, women who refuse to replicate the subjugation of women may be seen as cultural traitors, even though they are performing feminist motherwork. Charges of cultural betrayal from men within the Chicano community undermine the way women survive and protect their children from racism and violence. While white children may be assured of their value, in systems of racism “racial ethnic women have no such guarantees for their children; their children must first be taught to survive in systems that oppress them” (Collins 57). Women who resist domestic violence at the hands of intimate partners and in the case of these novels, the state, are able to perform motherwork. So, as Collins contends, “Instead of emphasizing maternal power in dealing with father as patriarch, or with male dominance in general, women of color are concerned with their power and powerlessness within an array of social institutions that frame their lives” (53). In contrast to earlier texts, these explicitly resist the patriarchal, imperialist, capitalist efforts to contain and

discipline maternal bodies. The ways women in these stories oppose social institutions form the second aspect of motherwork that the texts engage.

Motherwork is also a reaction to domestic violence within the hemisphere. For instance, when US policy toward Latin America continues to prop up dictators that kill innocent people, that hemispheric violence spurs Chicanas in the United States to resist through the motherwork of the Sanctuary movement. Additionally, when systems of institutionalized racism and sexism continue to affect women of color in the US, motherwork becomes necessary to ensure the dignity and survival of women.

Motherwork, then, does not have to be performed only by mothers, but by women who are committed to what Ana Castillo calls “an incorporation of mothering qualities into our value system [that] would radically change our world” (186). Castillo actually imagines this provocatively at the end of her 1994 novel *So Far From God*, when Sofia, the mother of four daughters dead from different social maladies forms M.O.M.A.S (Mothers of Martyrs and Saints), an organization that will continue activist work to combat the injustice that killed her daughters. The kind of radical change requires activism but in some ways can lead to “loss of individual autonomy” and “submersion of individual growth for the benefit of the group” (Collins 50). These additional burdens placed on women contrast with the view that motherwork is simply a celebration and valuation of women’s traditional roles. Rather, motherwork is both an effort to confront violence within the family to ensure the survival of children, as well as an impetus to confront violent racism from government, business, and religious institutions to advance the concerns of women, children, and men. It is this double-pronged approach to

motherwork that I seek to define in this chapter as I examine how women in the texts do motherwork that seems to exceed their commitments to each other through sisterhood.

The texts in this chapter are very deliberate in their deployment of domestic violence as an allegory for political violence. The opening scene of *Black Widow's Wardrobe* imagines the San Francisco police morphing into conquistadors, while “Woman Hollering Creek” links stunted economic potential for Mexican migrants to domestic violence. Indeed, in his comments about teaching *Mother Tongue*, Robert C. Mossman notes that while his students “agreed it was too sophisticated and too rich to be propaganda, they still objected to being „manipulated“ by the writer, by having their emotions pulled in different directions because the protagonist was so sympathetic [...students] argued that the political agendas in the novel were too transparent” (39). These texts self-consciously engage a social problem (domestic violence) to comment on another, pervasive social problem (policies of neocolonialism toward Latinos/as) and perform motherwork in both cases.

The larger social problems reflect a transnational reality of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Globalization, as marked by free trade and expanded rapid communication, has had an impact on literary studies. For instance, when discussing Third World conditions in the United States, Raymond Rocco comments, “Another major concern has been to develop an adequate way to theorize the „others“ who have existed on the margins of power and empire until recently and, because they have now challenged the structure of that power, are no longer „invisible“ and can thus not be ignored by intellectuals of the dominant traditions” (404). This means for Chicana studies that there is a simultaneous impetus to challenge the dominant constructions of power in

literary establishments as well as to engage in critical awareness of how a Chicana positionality might hold power with regard to Third World women. This chapter articulates and deconstructs this double-bind. In her discussion of the place of US Latino/a Studies, Edna Acosta-Belén argues that hemispheric studies and reimagining borders can help challenge sexism, racism, and classism in the current hegemonic structure, even as it moves into late capitalism. Particularly important to consider is how the pluralistic nature of feminism appears in both Latino/a studies and women's studies. In order to do this she describes how "cross-border coalitions" have "the potential of developing into more far-reaching, international movements aimed at counteracting more effectively the inequities, excesses, and overall undemocratic tendencies of transnational capital" (249). These cross-border coalitions are both valuable and dangerous; they may replicate power differentials between the First and Third Worlds even as they seek to eliminate them.

While the texts in this chapter support a pluralistic interpretation of feminism, they contain the potential for inequality on a global scale. A possible explanation for why these texts seem to demand a global or transnational approach is offered by Walter D. Mignolo. He states, in answer to his own question of why so few women have written about hemispheric geo-political identities, "If „Latin“ and „Anglo“ America are both patriarchal, feminist geo-political concerns today are global and transnational, rather than subcontinental, ones" (160). This comment helps explain why each of these texts seem unable to contain the violence within them to one home, one country, one border, or indeed, one hemisphere. For these reasons, I employ the term globalization, even though the characters in the novels work to combat hemispheric violence. I include motherwork

within this framework of globalization to expand how motherwork can function in realms beyond the familial and the local.

Each narrative studied here seems to be rooted in border and hemispheric identities, but historical and social conditions apply pressure that the term hemispheric cannot contain. For instance, in *Mother Tongue* (the most clearly hemispheric of the three works with its treatment of El Salvador, Mexico, the US, Brazil, and Canada) the action seems to be localized to Albuquerque, specifically Old Town. However, by expanding the text to examine the hemispheric relationships, globalization inadvertently appears, so that not only is the war in El Salvador implicated in the text, but the Vietnam War appears as significant conflict, Eastern religions appeal to the protagonist, and echoes of Africa and Tibet appear to reinforce the nature of civil unrest in the face of colonial oppression. The narrative does not exist within neat hemispheric parameters. The other two texts also stretch beyond the initial hemispheric reading: “Woman Hollering Creek” (which seems to be most clearly situated on the border) uses Corín Tellado, a prolific Spanish writer,<sup>1</sup> to spark Cleófilas’s dreams and resistance, and *Black Widow’s Wardrobe* engages the Spanish Conquest and Spanish Civil War as historical woundings that bleed into the New World—Western hemisphere. While a hemispheric approach is useful then to discuss these texts, it cannot contain all the forms of domestic violence the texts engage. Motherwork functions to explain how the characters encounter domestic violence on multiple levels.

In Lucha Corpi’s 1999 mystery novel, *Black Widow’s Wardrobe*, domestic violence is both the catalyst for a murder and the backdrop for the ensuing action. Licia Lecuona, aka Black Widow, murders her husband, Peter, after he repeatedly beats her



and threatens to cause a miscarriage. After she is released from jail, she seeks her children who have been stolen from her and illegally adopted by Peter's sister and her professor (smuggler) husband. While in prison, Licia comes to the realization that she is the reincarnation of Malinche/Doña Marina/Malintzin Tenepal.<sup>2</sup> The novel connects the violence done to Malinche by Spaniards to the violence Licia suffers from her husband and then her son. Gloria Damasco, Corpi's Chicana detective, attempts to find out who is trying to kill Licia, but through the course of her investigation, she discovers that Licia's threat comes from the professor who uses the son against the mother in his pre-Columbian artifact smuggling operation. Furthermore, her work on Licia's case spurs Gloria to reconsider her own motherwork and responsibility to her community.

Clearly connected to state violence and hemispheric violence, domestic violence occurs in the text from the very beginning. Licia is just out of prison after serving 19 years for murdering her husband who had beaten, raped, and abused her. As Gloria discovers, the jury was all male, and at the time of the trial, husbands could legally rape their wives (Corpi 16). Their refusal to consider her extenuating circumstances leads the state to continue to punish Licia, as a victim of domestic violence.<sup>3</sup> The legal system fails Licia repeatedly—at her trial, at protecting her property from squatters and druglords, at recognizing and punishing the doctor's corruption in stealing her babies. In another indictment of the legal system, the first time Gloria sees Licia, she is at a Day of the Dead celebration. As Licia leaves the celebration, she is attacked by San Francisco police officers, who in Gloria's sight morph into conquistadors. One of them stabs Licia but doesn't kill her. Later the reader discovers that the person who stabbed her is not an officer but instead her biological son, who here has taken on the role of plunderer and

killer of native peoples of Mexico in opposition to his own heritage. The connections between domestic violence and state and hemispheric violence overshadow the concerns of the narrative of family reunification. The narrative does not imagine a unified happy family at the end of the mystery because they have perpetrated too much violence on each other to survive as a family. Instead, only those who are most innocent can rebuild their family home.

Gloria Damasco ties domestic violence to war in a clear moment of allegory. She says, “Reading excerpts from Licia’s diary in *The Wardrobe* confirmed my belief that domestic violence is a kind of war, a covert war, with battles fought behind closed doors in bedrooms and kitchens” (24). These two locations—bedrooms and kitchens—locate domestic violence in women’s spaces; however, use of the word war holds patriarchal constructs accountable for domestic violence. The mention of a covert war calls to mind the Iran-Contra Affair and other covert actions the US government took toward Latin America in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Motherwork often occurs in the context of state violence when women must act to defend their communities against outside aggression. As Sara Ruddick points out in her foundational *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, “Striking is the courageous resistance, in the face of danger, against enormous odds, by mothers who live in poverty, tyranny, and slavery” (173). Motherwork requires women to encounter and contradict the violence of war. Ruddick also points out that violence is not a natural state of being for men either: “If men were so eager to be fighters, we would not need drafts, training in misogyny, and macho heroes, nor would we have to entice the morally sensitive with myths of patriotic duty and just cause. Indeed, history suggests that men have an even more ambivalent relation to the fighting expected of them than

women do to the mothering work for which they are said to be „naturally suited“ (152-53). What these two passages show, in relation to *Black Widow's Wardrobe* and the other texts in this chapter, is that while motherwork is a reaction to domestic violence and war, part of motherwork is to recuperate the possibilities for an anti-violent masculinity that accepts the myriad options for women's work and survival. Wars, and covert wars, create a pervasive culture of misogyny, machismo, and entitlement, which contribute to domestic violence.

As an originary point, the Spanish Conquest is the first war of many Corpi alludes to in the novel. Because of the way the novel slides between Malintzin's life and Licia's quest for her children, there are multiple historical ruptures of domestic violence. For instance, early in her investigation, Gloria learns that Licia's husband's family "left Spain in the 1930s, during that country's civil war. They still held noble titles and airs, but they no longer had the money for their social aspirations" (14). His family comes to the United States because of domestic violence in the home country. The civil war has wreaked havoc on the family's money, status, and presence. Like conquistadors, the family comes to exploit the Mexican-born Licia's family money. An echo of the fifteenth century comes in the twentieth. As the Spaniards took gold from the Aztecs, Peter and his family drain Licia's trust fund. Luckily they cannot take it all because Licia inherits part of her fortune while she is in prison. Furthermore, Licia's house echoes the past, as one of the few to have survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. She had lived in the house with her grandmother, who did her own motherwork in the community by buying a house for her laundry woman so that the woman would be able to keep an eye on her own children while she was working. Licia lived with her grandmother because her jealous father

killed her own mother and then killed himself in front of Licia. This building (and Malinche's house and church later) show that while people are fragile and may succumb to violence, place continuity becomes significant for characters in search of their pasts.

Licia employs two household workers to protect her and her home, and both employees carry historical wounds of domestic violence. The maid, Bernadina admits to Gloria, "I can't go back to Mexico. I only have an uncle who lives in Coyoacán but he can't protect me from...I was a maid to a rich family in Mexico City. My *patron* raped me and I ..." (104). She breaks down, fearing that Gloria will report her to immigration officials. Bernadina also fears the Professor who blackmails her and wants her to steal Licia's children's real birth certificates. She represents issues of poverty, body rights, and safety, since she controls very little about her own life. At this point, Gloria attempts to take on a feminist solidarity role for Bernadina as well even though Bernadina's actions undermine Licia's safety and goals.

For the other household worker, the violence extends south but implicates the north. Carmelo, a man working for Licia is in the US because as he explains, "In my village in Guatemala, a few miles from the border with Chiapas [...] My parents knew that the soldiers would kill me if they ever found me, so they sent me to Mexico, where I lived for a few years. Through the American Friends, I met some people who were working with the sanctuary program" (100). His narrative explains the hemispheric violence shadowing the narrative. Soldiers supported by US funds kill indigenous villagers, but he manages to escape through another network supported by individuals in the US. In this story there are also echoes of the Conquest and the ability native peoples had to ownership over their land, history, and minds. Michael Cisneros, who provides for

Carmelo and finds an ex member of the Grupo de Reacción to assist Gloria in Mexico, has business connections through his company that involves him in “talks for an international fair-trade agreement” (117). Clearly, as a Bay Area Chicano businessman, Cisneros is involved in the capitalization of Mexico but occupies a conflicted space. Does he participate in domestic violence in Mexico by hiring someone whose expertise comes from the secret police? Can he redeem himself by assisting political and economic refugees? These questions of war and its real affects on men and women spark the beginnings of motherwork to combat domestic violence.

Beyond the abuse Licia suffers, other scenes of domestic violence occur when the professor (Juan Gabriel) slaps his wife (Isabela) after she has let Gloria into their house (80). He continues to abuse his wife, silencing her and subsuming her desire to keep the children safe under his need to have a coconspirator in planning Licia’s death and his smuggling operation. By linking domestic violence to the smuggling of pre-Columbian artifacts, Corpi connects domestic violence and war. The market for the pre-Columbian artifacts in the United States is an extension of empire that has roots in the Conquest. In this way, as Tim Libretti suggests, Corpi is “highlighting not the transformation of empire into a genuinely kinder and gentler global capitalism but rather the continuity and persistence of the colonizing practices of multinational capitalism” (73). The demand for pre-Columbian artifacts (and to some extent the drugs that the professor also helps smuggle) is a result of neocolonialism the US enacts on the rest of the hemisphere. Gloria is not immune to the excitement of the artifact case, but she still sees her role as protecting Licia. Initially, Gloria seems to be paternalistic with regard to Licia, Bernadina, and Isabela. Gradually her approach shifts to a motherwork paradigm when

she realizes that she's not just seeking to protect these women, but also Mexico's national treasure from the artifact smugglers.

However, the scene of domestic violence must be read another way as well. Juan Gabriel abuses Isabela, and Gloria blames the victim, thinking she is one of those women who enjoys suffering. Gloria's paternalism appears when she wants to return to the house and "like a Don Quixote, do battle with Legoretta" (80). Gloria fashions herself a savior of all the women in the text; her view of herself is problematic because in some ways she enacts her First World judgment and privilege on the other characters, while in other ways she genuinely seeks to understand other perspectives and motivations. Gloria's position enhances the novel, because while she is the narrator, other events in the text reveal Gloria's intentions and complexities. Each scene with Isabela belies her role as a victim. Rather, she already engages in radical motherwork in opposition to her husband. Her motherwork centers on her children and their spiritual and literal survival. She allows the children to watch MTV—a symbol of rebellion, modernism, and youth culture—while their father is at work. She passes Gloria information about the location of the cave where Juan Gabriel has imprisoned Licia. Finally, when he threatens Gloria and her partners, Isabela attacks him, knocking him down, and saving all of their lives. Domestic violence has taken its toll on her though, and the one person she can't save is her son, who catches a bullet meant for Licia. Yet, Isabela's motherwork allows her to retain her daughter when Licia bequeaths her fortune on the two of them. As Peter's sister, Isabela is both implicated in the historical violence Spain did in the New World and exonerated from that violence by saving the reincarnation of Malinche (Licia) which allows her to die on her own terms. Gloria's desire to view victims of domestic violence as powerless

complicates her ability to do motherwork. Isabela's actions and refusal to accept anyone else dictating her existence challenge Gloria's view.

All of these historical references of domestic violence in relation to the significant moment of violence that spurs Licia to kill Peter reveal that the past is always present for the characters in the narrative. This is a theme in Corpi's other work as well. Libretti argues that in *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* the narrative "suggests that one cannot have done with history and that it will continue to erupt in and inform the present such that the political models of the past developed to understand experience and resist the conditions of existence defining that experience must not be forgotten" (77). Certainly this argument applies to *Black Widow's Wardrobe* in the way that the past Conquest continues to erupt in the present, through Malinche's reincarnation and the professor's theft of pre-Columbian artifacts. Yet resistance to the patriarchal (male and state) violence of the past is still a challenge for women in the present. Gloria as a Chicana detective works to subvert societal expectations for women, but Licia/Malintzin cannot escape the loss of her children, violence against her body, and loss of her wealth and property.

Indeed subverting gender roles takes heroic effort. Gloria does not become a detective until the death of her husband frees her from the traditional role of wife and mother. He claims to have been protecting her, but the text suggests that in fact, there is fear that Gloria (or any woman who works) will become La Llorona. Gloria fears that she will die alone, without seeing her mother or daughter again. For Gloria, motherwork requires being part of protecting her family, a residual admonition from her husband, but her motherwork also demands that she use her family for their ability to help her in her cases. It's a bit of a joke when Gloria tells another investigator, "I've also used my

mother and her *comadre* to do some work for me. I'd accept my dog's help if I had one, too" (115). Gloria admits that she needs a community in order to do the kind of work that will keep women and children safe from the ravages of global capitalism and domestic violence. She does seem to take advantage of her mother, her friend's nephew, and others throughout the story, sparking speculation that Gloria's character is selfishly flawed. Significantly, she never resorts to using her daughter to investigate for her. However, this controversy in Gloria's role reflects the problem Ana Castillo describes: "Most women who consider themselves self-sufficient and who have successful careers, are nonetheless shadowed by society's notion that „good woman“ means „mother.“ Good woman equals mother equals the Virgin Mary but not Eve, whose behavior is forever questioned" (117). Gloria had never had the career she had wanted because her husband had insisted that she be a mother first and foremost. Gloria capitulated while he was alive, which shows why she has trouble believing that other women could resist domestic violence and control; she never resisted herself. She is a mother but her continued quest for knowledge, especially hidden or forbidden knowledge, makes her much more like the Eve of the description above—one whose behavior returns wisdom and power. Gloria's motherwork does rely on a network of others, but even in the shadow of her husband's death, she is reluctant to endanger her daughter, which shows that she, more than the others, has internalized the dictates for being a woman and a mother.

For mothers in Corpi's novels, the myth of La Llorona looms large.<sup>5</sup> However, the very act of using this myth helps to subvert the mythic discourse surrounding it. The La Llorona myth itself is a form of domestic violence that blames women for abandonment and loss of children. Both La Llorona and Malinche have been victims of dominant



historical narratives written by and for men. As Gloria seeks justice for herself and other women, she challenges patriarchal violence. Furthermore, in a symbol of the power of motherwork to eradicate threats to the female body politic, Juan Gabriel's demise comes when the cave in the mountain collapses and kills him. While the mountain is called "Man's Mountain," the cave and the earthquake symbolize the power of women to vanquish guns and entire mountains that would threaten the existence and success of motherwork. This victory is significant, because when the law and the media judge Juan Gabriel, all they care about is his smuggling operation. The fact that he was an abusive husband and father and that he participated in kidnapping and attempted murder fades into the background of the news stories. These intimate crimes do not matter to the larger community, but motherwork is responsible for bringing both the domestic violence in his home and the domestic violence he was doing the country to light.

In another reformulation of damaging cultural myths, Sandra Cisneros's "Woman Hollering Creek" subverts narratives of cultural betrayal and La Llorona. Seemingly subconsciously, the characters Cleófilas, Felice, and Graciela embrace motherwork as a response to domestic violence. As Cleófilas contemplates marriage and her move from her father's house in Mexico to her new husband's house in Seguin, Texas, she is excited to begin a new life, but she quickly finds herself isolated while her husband Juan Pedro is at work. Outside her house Woman Hollering Creek flows, and she wanders down to it to assuage her loneliness. The water conjures up images of La Llorona, especially after Cleófilas gives birth to a son and becomes pregnant again.<sup>6</sup> The *telenovelas* she had loved in Mexico are not available in Seguin and her domestic life does not reflect them at all: Juan Pedro beats her; they have little money; and she has no friends. Yet, during her

second pregnancy, Cleófilas convinces Juan Pedro that she must have prenatal care. While at the clinic, she tells Graciela about the abuse. Graciela then arranges for her friend Felice to drive Cleófilas to San Antonio where she can catch a bus to Mexico back to her father's house. As they cross Woman Hollering Creek, Felice lets out a hollering laugh. Cleófilas returns to Mexico with the memory of Felice's exuberant holler as they cross the creek.

From a literary standpoint, the characters provide metaphorical constructions of bodies and conception. Felice and Cleófilas are mirror characters who end the story together by crossing water with their bodies. Felice's laugh inspires Cleófilas, and when she describes it to her father, she finds that the laugh is gurgling up in her own throat. Felice signals power through her refusal to adhere to gender norms. Cleófilas is astounded to realize that Felice drives a pickup, and when Cleófilas asks her about it, Felice responds, "I used to have a Pontiac Sunbird. But those cars are for *viejas*. Pussy cars. Now this here is a *real* car" (55). Furthermore, Felice shocks Cleófilas by saying that the truck is her own and that she does not depend on a husband for transportation, across the border or to the clinic. Cleófilas's impressed reaction to all of this is one bright instance of humor in the short story. As Tey Diana Rebolledo explains, and this particular scene is a good example of how her comments can apply to Chicana writing:

Chicana humor is not so much aimed at feelings of ethnicity or even at the dominant culture but rather, on a more personal level, at the realities of everyday living and at the poor self-image the Chicana has of herself. It strives to break the cultural stereotype. It also tries to deal with the anger the Chicana feels in her

relationships with men and the ambiguity she tries to resolve as she is caught between two cultures. (“Walking” 104)

As the two women laugh together, they bridge the gaps between women from both sides of the border. Their laughter combats the violence Cleófilas has experienced and begins to heal her self-image; suddenly she too can “holler” instead of weeping.

Interestingly, neither Graciela nor Felice biologically reproduce in the text. Their close relationship and the queering of Felice’s body and transportation suggest a woman-identified subjectivity that rejects both male violence and traditional constructions of masculinity. Graciela and Felice function as representative Western, woman-of-color feminists. While they seem to embody Western feminist ideals of sisterhood, their approach to assisting Cleófilas is more in tune with what Collins describes as the importance of theorizing motherhood (and motherwork) from shifting perspectives and experiences (62). They also embody androgynous characteristics that allow them to cross gender as well as national boundaries.

When assisting Cleófilas, Graciela and Felice may slide into a paternalistic role that suggests they have imposed cultural values of leaving violent relationships on Cleófilas. Graciela refers to her condescendingly as, “Another one of those brides from across the border” (54), indicating that she (like Gloria) sees this woman as nothing more than a victim of domestic violence. This assumption in connection with their challenges to traditional gender roles reflect Graciela and Felice’s positions as more or less privileged Westernized subjects. Cleófilas, as a subject from outside the U.S. represents populations of women that Western feminists have traditionally misunderstood. Yet, in this text, Cleófilas speaks with her own voice and gains her own agency, which allows

her to reproduce. Actually, as I will argue later, it becomes clear that Cleófilas, like women before her, “resorts to tricks” in order to escape the domestic violence of her relationship. Therefore, the text does not colonize the bodies of the non-Western women. Felice and Graciela merely support Cleófilas’s decisions to leave her husband and provide logistical help without pressuring Cleófilas one way or another. In effect, it’s their interaction that undoes the very ills of globalization that have brought them together in the first place. Instead of reproducing violence on each other through condescending relationships, women have taken control of reproduction through their body rights and their motherwork.

This text, then, highlights the private sphere of sexual politics and sexual violence and contrasts that to the global sphere of US imperialism. In “Woman Hollering Creek,” capitalism and border security are implicated in a relationship with Mexico. Crossing back and forth from Texas to Mexico and the changing sexual and political power relations within those crossings are central to the text. For instance, with regard to NAFTA, passed in the mid-1990s, Nicola Phillips remarks, “Although the infamous „giant sucking sound“ never in fact materialized, neither did the developmental benefits to Mexico which were supposed (for the United States) to stem the tide of (particularly illegal) migrants or deal with other core border security issues” (158). In other words, NAFTA failed to produce the touted benefits for the US or Mexico, much less a relationship between them. Through representing how women’s bodies reproduce and the scenes of domestic violence—both literally and metaphorically—the text invokes market systems of global capitalism, neo-colonialism, and trade imbalances.

Related to global capitalism are migration patterns and attitudes. Denise A. Segura's findings in her study of working and stay-at-home Mexicana and Chicana mothers reveal a slight difference in expectations for different women. She found that Mexicana woman expected to work and mother, whereas Chicanas felt pressure from their husbands and communities to relegate themselves to the home. Significantly, she found that "Mexicanas emigrated hoping to work" but that when men are adequately employed, "they begin pressuring wives to quit working [...] actively pursue continuity of their superordinate position within the family [and this tells us that] the way motherhood is conceptualized in both the Mexican and Chicano communities, particularly with respect to employment, is wedded to male privilege, or patriarchy" (225). What this means for the story is that Juan Pedro is invested in presenting an image that suggests that he is well off enough that he can enforce social norms against Cleófilas working, or indeed even leaving the house. Immigration policy and availability of employment for women also plays a role in the story, as Cleófilas uses the impending birth of her child to subvert inflexible economic structures as well as cultural expectations.

"Woman Hollering Creek" rewrites cultural scripts that trap women into believing in their lack of control. The story especially challenges the narrative of the *telenovela* and the legend of La Llorona, and according to Jacqueline Doyle "extends and revises such histories, opening a borderland space where old myths take on new resonance and new forms and where new stories are possible" (54). Cleófilas is marked by the cultural myth of La Llorona. She must work to change that mark to La Gritona. Indeed, this fits with critical interpretations of "Woman Hollering Creek" that contend Cleófilas "regains her

voice by transforming herself from a stereotypical Llorona figure, a weeping victim, to a *Gritona*, a hollering warrior” (Carbonell 64). The experience of domestic violence also marks Cleófilas’s body. Her efforts to change herself from La Llorona who cries for herself and her children into La Gritona who embraces laughter, empowerment, and voice comes as she rejects domestic violence.

Cleófilas accepts her body when she rejects Juan Pedro’s abuse and chooses to leave Texas and return to Mexico. Her father’s house will always accept her, but she’s expected to cook, clean, and care for the men in the house. Sonia Saldívar-Hull aptly describes this ending by commenting, “Cleófilas’s decision to return to Mexico and her father’s house does not give us a utopian reading; nor does it do something worse: turn to the Third World and to Third World women for a quick solution to what will inevitably be a long historical process” (117). What seems like a body moving from one captive place to another is actually a survival strategy that allows Cleófilas to regain control of her physical safety outside a context of domestic violence. She attempts to wrest control as the readers realize that colonial conquest, La Llorona, and male violence have always already marked her body. Pregnancy and childbirth have affected Cleófilas, and Juan Pedro has bruised and marked her body in ways he does not want the women at the prenatal clinic to see. She recounts an episode of violence that centers on the anti-romance of her life: “He had thrown a book. Hers. From across the room. A hot welt across the cheek. She could forgive that. But what stung was the fact that it was *her* book, a love story by Corín Tellado, what she loved most now that she lived in the U.S., without a television set, without the *telenovelas*” (52). This scene underscores all that Cleófilas feels is wrong with her world. Juan Pedro has hit her with a book, and she

decides to leave him. To avoid misreading this scene, I turn to Carl Gutiérrez-Jones' discussion of Chicana humor where he argues that in this passage, "Cisneros, of course, is not suggesting with this symbolism that Cleófilas has been done in by reading. Instead, Cisneros is making a point about certain kinds of reading and one's relationship with these modes of literacy" (121). Saldívar-Hull further explains that Cleófilas wakes up and rejects the "media's mission [...] to transform the largely female audience into consumers, both of material products and, worse, of a conservative ideology" which includes passivity, fatalism, and docile adherence to religion, traditional values, and capitalist impulses (115).<sup>7</sup> Both of these analyses of the scene focus on the origins of a romantic, traditional, gendered script, on the shame Cleófilas feels for not fitting the script, and ways the script can be subverted. Cleófilas reads a gendered script and knows that it does not fit her situation, but what she ultimately resists is Juan Pedro's attempt to control her (very minimal) leisure time.

After he throws the book at her and she begins to realize that their relationship is never going to turn out like it does in her romances, she begins to think of ways to leave him. In this way, he seeks to control her reading because he cannot compete with her other world. However, in an interesting narrative shift, the story also prompts exploration of how state violence functions against the bodies of men of color as well when Juan Pedro begins crying and seeking comfort after he abuses Cleófilas. Domestic violence is clearly a social justice problem in the text. When he first beats her, "She could think of nothing to say, said nothing. Just stroked the dark curls of the man who wept and would weep like a child, his tears of repentance and shame, this time and each" (Cisneros 48). Juan Pedro replicates systems of inequality outside the home as systems of violence

within the home. As he and his buddies, who have low-end jobs and no prospects for advancement, sit around drinking, they are unable to express their thoughts to each other. The narrative characterizes them as “dogs chasing their own tails before lying down to sleep, trying to find a way, a route, an out, and—finally—get some peace” (48). The men’s bodies can have no peace, and as long as Cleófilas stays with Juan Pedro, she cannot either.

Interestingly, their lack of peace implicates Cleófilas and Juan Pedro in the history of Seguin, Texas. Named after Juan Seguín, the setting in the story reflects the lack of peace for the men and for Seguín himself, who was born into a Tejano family but supported the Texans in the Revolution. When Texans won, they began expelling Tejanos from the country.<sup>8</sup> Even though he had fought against the Mexican Army, Anglos branded him a traitor and exiled him to Mexico. Once there he was arrested and later conscripted into the Mexican Army for the U.S.-Mexico war. Branded a traitor to both countries, Seguín did not even have peace in death, as his body was exhumed and moved between the two countries. This historical backdrop informs the story and the men’s positions as being caught between two countries. The history also underscores spatial urgency for Chicanas. Mary Pat Brady contends, “Chicana feminists have further attended to the critique of the public-private binary and its power to structure space” (10). In order to have peace, Cleófilas must break the taboo of the public-private binary, and to claim space, she must remove her body from the house. Importantly though, and unlike Juan Seguín or Juan Pedro, she chooses when and how to leave.

Her leaving is important, because she must resort to wits to do so. Her first use of wits is to convince Juan Pedro that she must see a doctor during this pregnancy for



prenatal care, so as to not be “split down the center” (53) again. This imagery clearly shows Cleófilas on the threshold of borders and her own choices. She refuses to be split; instead, she will live unified within herself. She decides she must leave when he throws the book, but before that, Cleófilas realizes how dangerous and precarious her situation is. While the story suggests a parallel to *La Llorona*, the emphasis is on rejecting the myth that hurts women. In that story, the man leaves and the grieving, angry woman kills her children. Cleófilas is not going to kill Juan Pedro, nor is she going to kill her children. She embraces motherwork to protect them and ensure their survival. Initially, she thought that they would have more advantage as US citizens, but she soon realizes that the US is not a safe place for her and the children. Juan Pedro and his friends laugh at another friend, “Maximiliano who was said to have killed his wife in an ice-house brawl when she came at him with a mop” (51). His excuse—that she was armed—makes Cleófilas rightfully afraid. The law must have been on Maximiliano’s side; he’s free to laugh with the others instead of sitting in prison for his crime.

Grisly stories of murder psychologically affect Cleófilas. She recalls other articles she has read in the newspaper: “This woman found on the side of the interstate. This one pushed from a moving car. This one’s cadaver, this one unconscious, this one beaten blue. Her ex-husband, her husband, her lover, her father, her brother, her uncle, her friend, her co-worker. Always” (52). Then, even if Cleófilas leaves, it is not enough. She must go somewhere where she and her children will be safe from Juan Pedro’s abuse. So when she returns to her father’s home, she does not merely exchange one patriarchy for another; she ensures survival for herself and her children. Research shows that when “news stories [are] written in the passive voice about violence against women, male

readers (but not female ones) attribute less victim harm and less offender responsibility, and both male and female readers become more accepting of abuse” (Meloy and Miller 31). Furthermore, in Meloy and Miller’s discussion of the murders of Laci Peterson and Evelyn Hernandez, they show how Peterson “had the demographic profile on which reporters could credibly construct an identity as an innocent victim” whereas Hernandez’s profile “a Hispanic woman from an uncertain background” led to a higher instance of victim blaming (41). While Cleófilas does not have academic research to confirm her suspicions, she acts in self preservation to avoid becoming like the women she reads about in the news and abandons hope of reconciling with her husband like women do on the *telenovelas*.

In examining how cultural information flows across borders, it is also important to note that even as Cleófilas and Felice have romanticized ideas about each other, they recognize each other’s strength. This mutual respect builds a way to consider “the concerns of many women across the world regardless of whether or not they choose to describe themselves as ‚feminists’” with special attention to the “relationship between gender, the nation-state, and mobile, transnational capital” (Grewal and Kaplan 22). These interrelated concerns affect the relationship between the women as it invokes their sisterhood and reveals the barriers to their sisterhood even though they share an ethnicity. To some extent this narrative relies on feminist hybrid subjects within the United States as voices of reason or rescue, even though they provide support for other women’s actions. In “Woman Hollering Creek” Felice’s truck and laugh inspire Cleófilas to find her own laugh, but all the same, Felice and Graciela have spun an Americanized soap opera of escape that makes them the heroes of Cleófilas’s story. For instance, Graciela

says, “When her kid’s born she’ll have to name her after us, right?” and Felice replies, “Yeah, you got it. A regular soap opera sometimes” (55). This positionality evokes Cherríe Moraga’s discussion of American Chicanas relationship to Third World women by showing the difference between their primary concerns—sexual liberation v. poverty and survival. While Moraga knows that lesbian sexuality is marginalized by dominant US society, she recognizes that her theorizing about it is part of her privilege (*Loving* 32). Felice and Graciela have space for their sexuality. Cleófilas’s first concern must be her physical safety, poverty, and her children’s future; she does not entertain the possibility of another romantic relationship..

Even though Felice and Graciela have hemispheric privilege as border subjects engaging in motherwork (or in their fantasy of having the child named after them, “godmotherwork”), their exuberance does lend a glimmer of hope for the future. Their idea of having the child named after them suggests that Cleófilas is carrying a girl (and it makes sense that Graciela would know, having performed a prenatal ultrasound)—a girl who would be the first in Cleófilas’s immediate family since she only has brothers, a father, and a son. The significance of Cleófilas leaving takes on more meaning with the possibility of a girl. Cleófilas will never tell her son, as Anzaldúa has heard mothers tell their sons, “to beat their wives for not obeying them, for being *hociconas* (big mouths), [...] for expecting their husbands to help with the rearing of children and the housework” (38). If she does not tell her son this, her daughter will not internalize it either, but more importantly, Castillo suggests the possibility that “Witnessing our mothers endurance of husbands’ physical abuse [is] an example of what *not* to tolerate” (131) but she’s doubtful that this can break a cycle of violence. Regardless of the difficulty of addressing domestic

violence, the narrative “gives [the] female protagonist new options” as Anna Marie Sandoval describes, in part it is “making women aware of their situation and offering new options for living as independent and powerful people” (34). I think her reading is a little utopian, but certainly, Cleófilas has broken the cycle for her daughter, and even though she is afraid of what the neighbors will say, she has already liberated her daughter from the traps of romantic scripts, community gossip, and a violent, male-dominated household.

In Demetria Martínez’s *Mother Tongue*, a young woman romanticizes her role in assisting a political refugee from El Salvador. Mary (soon called María) embarks on what for her is a romantic adventure when she picks José Luis up from the Albuquerque airport. As she falls in love, and he seeks comfort, they spend time holed up in her house near Old Town. One night José Luis imagines that María is the group of men who came to kill his fiancée Ana. He attacks her and the violence done to him vicariously through US policy in El Salvador comes back around, funneled through a “safe community” space onto her body. The violence shocks her yet like Cleófilas, she attempts to comfort him after he ends the attack. Because María views (and excuses) the violence as a reaction to the war, his expression of male violence against women has a gendered element as well as environmental, political, and social ramifications.

The scene of domestic violence in this novel is directly involved in hemispheric relationships, because José Luis is from El Salvador, where a civil war rages and people are “disappeared” into political prisons and mass graves. However, the El Salvadoran civil war, which would be a domestic concern for El Salvador, is actually connected to other liberation movements in Central America. Not only connected to movements in

Nicaragua, Honduras, and rebels hiding in Costa Rica but also the target of US conservative politics, the civil war in El Salvador has global reach. Indeed, the Iran-Contra affair serves to illustrate how implicated the entire world was in seemingly domestic wars in Central America. The name “Iran-Contra” elides US and Israeli involvement in the scandal, yet this event symbolizes how a civil war in a small county takes on global significance in the Cold War era and beyond.<sup>9</sup>

As a rallying point for Chicana feminists, the asylum movement in the United States worked to provide shelter for Salvadorans who were in danger. However, as Debra Castillo points out, “Many Latino supporters felt both empowered by their ability to assist Central American refugees, and disempowered by a largely white leadership” (10). Certainly, this is reflected in the religious organizations that led the movement. Sanctuary, while male dominated in some ways, included left leaning white women as well as Chicanas.<sup>10</sup> The movement can be seen as part of a pan-Latina identity; the assistance Chicanas gave to Salvadorans is oppositional to US imperial and genocidal dominance, which damages the Chicano family.<sup>11</sup> Dalia Kandiyoti claims, “The conceptualization of a hemispheric Latino community based on solidarity for the common goals of social and political justice in all of the Americas has to remain prominent to counter mainstream homogenized images of imagined transnational communities formed by market-driven forces” (423). The resistance to “imagined transnational communities” works to alleviate charges of cultural betrayal aimed at Chicanas. By showing how violence moves through the hemisphere and including the image of the Underground Railroad, *Mother Tongue* links intimate domestic violence to policies of violence against disempowered groups. This novel, more than the others,

creates a specific hemispheric narrative of domestic violence, yet the central story line which moves from El Salvador, through Mexico, to Albuquerque, to Canada, and back to El Salvador cannot contain the ways that the characters experience identities as global citizens as well. The final image of María's son, also named José Luis, committing to learning Spanish and working with environmental contamination issues in China comments on the inability of any contemporary novel to stay contained within the hemisphere.

Because political and historical conditions shape the violent outburst, neither the narrative nor María herself blame José Luis for his actions. Shifting gender categories and national origins affect the power dynamics in the relationship. Laura Lomas declares:

Both of them play the part of victim and victimizer in the perpetuation of violence. For if María generously provides a temporary shelter for José Luis, she also makes him into a character in an escapist romantic narrative in order to avoid facing the causes of her own depression. And although José Luis helps María relearn her Spanish and appreciate her Chicano history, he also transfers his unresolved memories of being tortured by the Salvadoran government onto her body in a traumatic incident of domestic abuse. (360)

If this reading implicates María in her own cycle of violence, Debra Castillo does the same, claiming, "Mary's mistake is to try to make the Salvadoran man her object, to attempt to possess him and his culture as a way of waging a spiritual war against her own oppression as a Mexican American and as a woman" (23). Both of these critics seek to explain how power differentials within the couple's relationship manifest in this explosive scene. While José Luis retains patriarchal power and a validated narrative voice

in newspapers and churches, Mary's past of hidden sexual abuse is silenced and repressed. However, she can move freely in Albuquerque as a US citizen; as fraught and hybrid as her identity is, she retains some protection in her citizenship. José Luis cannot travel without her. She comes to represent "an unalloyed American, one who is complicit with the forces helping to oppress his people" (Kandiyoti 437). In other words, she is La Malinche, speaking English better than Spanish and oppressing his people through her relationship to Anglo America. As Lomas argues, this scene "interweaves narratives of domestic and foreign violence to expose the fiercely defended homeland as inevitably contaminated by the violence its armies wreak elsewhere" (366). In this allegorical reading, the scene of domestic violence implicates both the powerful and the powerless though gender and national origin.

As narrator and main character, Mary writes the story of José Luis as a transnational romance. The impetus for the narrative, though, is Mary and José Luis's son, conceived the night of the domestic abuse. This night does three things to María: implicates her in the allegorical and violent relationship of the US to El Salvador; brings back a repressed childhood memory of sexual abuse by a man who watched the destruction of Vietnamese cities on TV as he abused her; and leads to her pregnancy. These three events both underscore and rupture hemispheric domestic violence by locating it in several countries as well as on Mary's body. However, the multiple woundings on her body in this one event lead to a realization for Mary and allow her to find her own voice within her own commitment to writing and activism. She finds strength in claiming her own story from her own words and other's interpretations. Questions from her son prompt Mary to return to the site of political and social wounding

in a trip to El Salvador, where she discovers that José Luis is likely alive and well in Canada.<sup>12</sup> Through her writing and subsequent travel, she blends motherwork and activism.

The scene of domestic violence also is allegorical linguistically. María's speaking position in the novel comes from her identity as a mother. Without that identity, she might never have recreated this story, but even her son is unwilling to hear her speak, and certainly not in Spanish. As a woman, she occupies a denigrated speaking position. As a young girl, she was unable to tell her mother, or anyone else, about the neighbor who molested her because she "has no words for what happened, no words for evil" (167). This comment evokes Cherríe Moraga's play *Giving Up the Ghost* about a young woman who was raped as a child. Maria Herrera-Sobek's comments about the play are pertinent here as well: "The violent act visited upon the young woman on the verge of adolescence produces a *hole*, a nothingness, an empty space. The female child is obliterated at the precise temporal juncture of becoming a woman" ("The Politics" 249). The trauma enacted on Mary is silencing and erasing.

Even later, María has more difficulty relating this story than the one about José Luis striking her. In the basement, with José Luis, her innocent comments and questions give him flashbacks to his torture in El Salvador and the discovery of his murdered fiancée. He strikes her repeatedly in the face, on the cheeks, and on the mouth. The mouth is a significant place to hit her, because it is an attempt to shut down her speaking voice. By morphing into the enemy in his mind, she has become the ultimate cultural betrayer—committed a linguistic betrayal of culture. At the end of the scene, María describes what the violence has taken from her: "War is a god that feasts on body



parts...It cut out my tongue” (161). Writing, using her own journal as well as newspaper accounts and José Luis’s journal, gives Mary ownership over her story and the violence that has happened to her. Her ability to write her story and take his words establishes Mary’s power over the narrative. The newspaper accounts contrasted with her own version of the story calls into question the dominant US narrative of safety, power, war, and control. Only by doing radical motherwork, writing the story of his origins for her son, as a fulfillment of a *promesa* she made when he was born premature, whether or not he reads or cares, can María regrow her tongue.

The domestic abuse and the sexual abuse it recalls are both personal and political. The hemispheric repercussions extend to implicate US empire, but the personal ramifications signal a gendered wound that Mary’s power as a US citizen cannot mitigate. As Kandiyoti points out, José Luis is complicit “in male violence and the rejection of women’s sexual freedom, concealed behind the ideology of cultural and national differences” (437). He does not take Mary’s wounding seriously as he sees her as existing for his own sexual and emotional pleasure. If domestic violence can and does spark motherwork, José Luis is a good example of how men evade the necessity of doing motherwork in their communities. The violence done on his body in the name of civil war could have produced more radical efforts at community survival, but instead he transfers that violence to María’s body, leaving her to cope with the emotional consequences and care for the child she conceives that night. He negatively reproduces; by reproducing violence within the home, in the basement, away from public space, he forces María to shoulder the responsibility for reproduction, pregnancy, and motherwork. Shortly after this event, he leaves, showing again his lack of awareness of her beyond his sexual and

emotional balm. His trip to Canada reproduces the Underground Railroad as Canada signifies a more pure sense of freedom than US imperialism. While José Luis is certainly a victim of hemispheric domestic violence, he has abused his position of power over María rendering her voiceless until she reclaims her own power through motherwork as a response to domestic (physical and hemispheric) violence.

When José Luis gives his testimonial to the church audience, it validates his experience as man and as a refugee. As María says, “In those days, when a refugee told his or her story, it was not psychoanalysis, it was testimonio, story as prophecy, facts assembled not to change the self but the times” (32). This comment shows the power of José Luis’s story even though the newspaper account distorts his words. He has an audience, including María, who believes him and continues to send money and resources to El Salvador. It is significant then that José Luis’s story is powerful enough to try to change the times, whereas María is unable to even voice her traumatic testimony to her mother or any others. It remains bottled up, even though it too is a story of violation and war that needs to be told in order to change the times that tacitly condone violation of women and girls as a right during war time. In discussing the effects that “modernization” has had on Latin American peoples and economies, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita remark, “The testimonial can in fact serve as a useful way for considering different spheres encompassed by „postmodernism,“ and of examining its position within literary spaces, while at the same time noting its relation to the market and links to various social movements” (495). Both María and José Luis have testimonials to give that are part of social movements, yet his words are deemed more valuable because they play out on a large political stage, whereas hers seem to only affect

a single individual on a very private scale. By attaching a different value to each of their traumas, the society around them has behaved like the Mexican authorities in *Black Widow's Wardrobe* where the only crimes that matter are those done to a country and not to a person—let alone a woman.

Both scenes, of physical abuse and the sexual abuse it recalls, link war and silencing. The man who molests Mary “smiles his minus sign smile, canceling the girl” and later her mother (166). She believes he will “cancel whole populations” (167). As he molests Mary, he watches scenes from the Vietnam War on television. The man redirects the violence that the US troops are doing to villages in Vietnam onto Mary’s brown body. His mouth and actions have the ability to cancel her voice. Like María experiences later in the basement, her voice is devalued, incoherent, and subject to silencing by men who are more concerned with war. As Debra Castillo argues, Mary is “a survivor of another and intimate gender war” (16). This war supports a system in which women and girls are never safe from being used as objects to satisfy men (and militaristic) power and privilege. Even though the gender war seems separate from US involvement in El Salvador and in Vietnam, the gender war shadows these (originally covert) wars, evoking again what Gloria Damasco calls the covert war of domestic violence when she begins her investigation into *Black Widow*.

María’s motherwork stems from her mothering role model—not her own mother, but her godmother Soledad. As an activist deeply involved in the Sanctuary movement, Soledad warns Mary not to fall in love with the refugee; she also gives seemingly mundane instructions regarding his clothing, legal needs, original recipes, and household care. The connection María forges with Soledad reminds her that political activism can be

an appropriate channel for motherwork. Soledad stands by her in the hospital when baby José Luis is born three months premature. Moreover, Soledad continues to encourage María to learn Spanish and to use her political consciousness to actively pursue justice for communities of color as well as resistance to US imperial objectives. Soledad seems to reject motherwork by engaging in spy-like behavior, even writing once, “I’m slipping this under the door so that if they ever catch me, I won’t have conspiratorial use of the mails added to all the other charges I’ve chalked up” (10). While it may seem that she is using her goddaughter for her own political purposes, the task brings María back to herself after the death of her own mother. Soledad moors María to a woman identified history even as she falls in love with José Luis. María writes, as she becomes more in tune with her politics, “I reminded myself I am the descendant of women who did something useful with their hands, who knew what really mattered was to help shape something that would outlast their lives and their loves” (24). The focus on building with her hands means that María has already realized that while her voice may be devalued, she can write and that writing creates a different kind of record for radical motherwork that remains visible.

Finally, through her son, María’s efforts at motherwork come full circle. His father could not internalize the need to reproduce positive work for the survival of a community, but through María, the young José Luis finds his own potential to reproduce motherwork goals in a community. Originally, he had planned to work with community sustainability and environmental protection in China or Brazil, but after the trip to El Salvador, José Luis refocuses his ambition, learns Spanish, and plans to work with groups reclaiming land that was seized from the poor in the 1970s. Radical motherwork engenders this kind of change. The novel comes full circle by moving from El Salvador

to the US to Canada and back again as the young man finds that he can reproduce a different kind of benefit to his community of ancestry. He eclipses the violence in his past and creates potential for a different kind of activism—one that is centered on land, sustainability, and community. As Frederick Luis Aldama points out, this kind of activism matters because within our identities people reproduce both biologically and socially. He remarks, “Even before the self is ethnic or gendered, it is formed in relation to the class struggle (in which guaranteed rights and laws are opposite to the interests of a ruling class) within the framework of the modern nation-state” (13). Resistance to the modern nation-state is what sparks and reproduces motherwork, even if men are doing it. Furthermore, resistance to environmental contamination and assertion of land rights evokes a long history of Chicana/o activism; in literature and in reality according to Herrera-Sobek, “Environmental contamination becomes linked to the oppression of the Chicano people. Thus the search for social justice and concern for the environment become one and the same. The pollution of the environment is perceived most acutely in the farmlands across the nation” (“The Nature” 129). When José Luis puts his privileged hemispheric identity to use for land rights in El Salvador, he is not being paternalistic; rather he is fulfilling a legacy of Chicano motherwork.

These three texts, *Mother Tongue*, “Woman Hollering Creek,” and *Black Widow’s Wardrobe*, all rewrite cultural myths women can occupy. Even as women attempt to resist these mythologies, they become survivors of domestic violence at the hands of men and states that would keep them safely ensconced in the gender roles. These narratives perform critiques of domestic violence by very conscientiously not blaming women for the violence they receive. Furthermore, the texts empower their protagonists by mostly

providing creative ways for the women to negotiate their empowerment. Mary writes, thereby wresting control of her own voice; Cleófilas returns to Mexico with a gurgle in her throat; and Licia dictates the terms of her disappearance after she has killed her abusive husband and provided for her daughter. While none of these texts give a joyful ending, there is evidence that the women gain voice and resist the logic of cultural betrayal through their actions. Their resistance is not only to the violence they experience in their homes but also to state-sponsored, capitalist violence that would silence them as well.

The writings in this chapter take on the challenges of globalization, power imbalances across and within nations, and the ways that women can respond to these challenges in the face of violence that seeks to destroy individual women, communities, and national identities. Motherwork, especially when practiced by a variety of people, helps ensure not only survival, but thriving communities that actively pursue justice and liberation across coalitions. Through motherwork, Chicana activists link to other groups of Latinas in the United States, women in Central and South America, and global feminists throughout the Third World. The potential for a coalition, multi-genre approach to understandings of domestic violence awaits.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Sonia Saldívar-Hull makes some important comments about the romances and their transnational implications by discussing the danger that “Tellado’s readers are taught to believe in a social fantasy in which anyone can live anywhere in the world and succeed financially” (115), but as she rightly points out, “For Cleófilas, who reads the Tellado novelas as primers for her future as a wife and as self-help manuals that feed her aspirations to upward mobility, the romances are most insidious in their denial of race, class, and cultural differences” (116). Cleófilas’s resistance to these narratives is slow in coming, but powerful once she decides to reject the sad narrative they advocate.

<sup>2</sup> Malinche, of course, is the pejorative name given to the woman who translated for Cortez. Those discussing her conversion to Catholicism use her Christian name, Doña Marina, occasionally. However, in recovery projects, her given name, in her native language, Malintzin Tenepal, may be accepted as most legitimate. In the novel, Licia signs her suicide note Malintzin Tenepal, but commits suicide in the Catholic Church where Doña Marina had prayed.

<sup>3</sup> Presumably the lawyer might have introduced Battered Women’s Syndrome, a condition that has its own legal problems. In a recent case, a lawyer prosecuting a women’s shelter for failing to protect a client used BWS to argue that women should not be allowed to make decisions for themselves. Emi Koyama points out the dangers inherent in changing the definition of BWS and states that BWS “originally invented to explain why some women end up murdering their abusers rather than simply escaping and to help free or reduce sentences for women charged with such crimes—is now being used by domestic violence „experts” to negate survivor’s agency and thus justify paternalistic rules and actions by the legal and shelter systems” (215).

<sup>4</sup> It makes sense that Corpi evokes the legacy of the Sanctuary movement because Chicanas were a significant section of the population protesting US actions in Latin America.

<sup>5</sup> According to Gianna M. Martella, “Corpi also ties motherhood with myth when two of the tragic female characters in her novels [...] are compared to *La Llorona*” (211). She cites Lillian from *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* and Licia. I would argue that this is even more pervasive and haunts Gloria’s visions of losing her own daughter, Tania. Furthermore, in *Crimson Moon* Ramona is figured as both La

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Llorona and Malinche, when an agent from the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Bureau rapes her. She gives up her daughter amidst feelings of cultural betrayal and subsequently goes insane.

<sup>6</sup> The folk story of La Llorona (the Crying Woman) has many incarnations. But generally, La Llorona is a woman who married a man of a higher class. They had children, then he left her for a woman of his station. She drowned their children in a creek and forever haunts creeks looking for her children and weeping (Carbonell 53-56). In the story, the creek is called La Gritona (the Hollering Woman). Cleófilas wonders if the woman is hollering in misery. She initially thinks that La Gritona is “such a funny name for a creek so pretty and full of happily ever after” (Cisneros 47). After she gives birth and Juan Pedro becomes more abusive, Cleófilas imagines that she hears the creek as La Llorona calling to her, and she “wonders if something as quiet as this drives a woman to the darkness under the trees” (51).

<sup>7</sup> Like other women in my analysis, Cleófilas’s reading symbolizes an escape from reality that is threatening to men. For instance, Beatriz’s desire to read spurs her revenge on her attackers and ensures that she has the brains and education to live on her own terms. In a different construction, Marcela reads comic books which annoys her husband, renders her childlike, and affirms the media’s agenda for women’s behavior. Cleófilas’s reading is akin to Marcela’s because of the kinds of reading she does. Across all the women though, their ability to read is what spurs their desire for more than a stereotypical female role, even if what their reading affirms that role.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on this fascinating character, see *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*, edited by Jesús F. de la Teja, Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> See Walsh, Lawrence, *Iran-Contra: The Final Report*, New York: Times Books, 1994 for a complete history of the scandal.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to *Mother Tongue*, Helena María Viramontes’s “The Cariboo Café” (1985) deals with her commitment to raising awareness for the refugees and humanizing a woman who lost her young son to the civil war, and Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Bean Trees* (1988) features two characters from El Salvador as part of what Kingsolver claimed in a letter to her mother that was an attempt to put everything she cared about into the novel “human rights, Central American refugees, the Problem That Has No Name, abuse of the powerless, racism, poetry, freedom, childhood, motherhood, Sisterhood is Powerful” (170).



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<sup>11</sup> A more recent book by Moraga, *Waiting in the Wings*, comments on motherhood and the ability of women, especially lesbian women, to raise a child. Her narrative fiercely embraces motherwork—by both her and her partner—as they have to literally ensure the boy’s survival and simultaneously create a family of different ethnicities and backgrounds for him.

<sup>12</sup> His final location in Canada reinforces the hemispheric identity he has assumed. Comparisons of the Sanctuary movement to the Underground Railroad are also well served by his final location.

### Conclusion: Social and Historical Conditions of Domestic Violence

I have argued in the preceding pages that domestic violence has appeared in texts written by and about Mexican Americans as a way of simultaneously critiquing the violence done to women within the home by members of their own community and violence done to Mexican Americans within the nation by government policies and racist assumptions about the national domestic space. In the introduction to this project, I mentioned that *Salt of the Earth* has been widely used in Chicano/a studies as well as Women's studies programs for educational purposes; however, it would easily fit into history, film, or sociology classes as an example of the ways that social and historical conditions affect labor laws, class identity, and blacklisted film production. Esperanza rejects the "old way" of domestic violence and shows Ramon that she will participate in public social action to protect her family from violence from the mine owners and government officials. Because the film does such a good job of representing how social and historical conditions outside the home affect gender relations within the home, it deserves to be included in wide-reaching studies.

When I tell people what I study, the first question they often ask is, "Is there more domestic violence in Mexican American households than in other ethnic groups?" With an issue like domestic violence, it seems that people think that if it is worth talking or writing about, it must be in a sociological or legal context of "fixing the problem." While my project is interdisciplinary, I have not attempted to review sociological or legal implications of domestic violence. What I mean to convey here is that domestic violence is not simply a construct within a literary tradition; it is also a lived reality for so many

women. Responsible scholarship means acknowledging that reality so as to not lose sight of the fact that while literary analysis enables us to see domestic violence as part of a double-voiced discourse, there is also the reality of silence, secrecy, and fear that is part of women's lives. Even though my project has not answered any questions of how to reduce the impact of domestic violence on women's real lives, it has served to offer motherwork and activism as a literary construct that combats the social and historical conditions that contribute to domestic violence in Chicana/o communities.

The texts I've examined in the last two hundred pages also deserve to be part of a broad study of the ways that social and historical conditions are homologous representations of domestic violence. Or, more simply, this literature offers structural parallels to ideas in society as well as historical conditions that affect the authors and characters. The implications of this study are threefold: (1) This study fills a gap in the literature of empire and nation by recognizing how Mexican Americans represent domestic violence symbolically and allegorically; (2) The study provides significant points of contrast and sheds light on the emergence of Chicana identity and activism by addressing the ways that Mexican American women are represented by others (Mexican American men as well as Anglo writers of both genders); (3) The study opens up possibilities for understanding Chicana literary activism through examining constructions of motherwork that subvert patriarchal narratives.

By situating Mexican American writers firmly within and against the American literary canon, I have bridged literary discussions of empire, nation, and Manifest Destiny. Of course, the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project has redefined Chicana/o literary production, and my work examines many recovered texts

and places them in the larger context of American literature—the social problem novel, the historical romance, and then travel narrative, among other genres. Through my work on texts such as *The Squatter and the Don* (1885), “The Gold Vanity Set” (1913), and *George Washington Gómez* (1990), I have addressed questions of national identity, citizenship, and the boundaries of empire. My discussion of these texts shows that Mexican American writers have been ambivalent about US imperialism as they have participated and benefitted in that project. However, I find that their criticisms of US empire are important to the development of a national identity as they protest the relegation of Mexican Americans to second-class citizens subject to the violent whims of domestic policy. Each of these writings resists the negative treatment and portrayals of Mexican Americans, yet they each go further to create complicated narrative of privileged complicity, religious Othering, and instances of violence within the community. As the writers tell stories that reveal domestic violence, they confront charges of cultural betrayal and address the homology of conditions of violence within the community that are similar in structure to the kinds of violence within the nation.

The second important conclusion to this project is the recognition that while Mexican American women have produced more accounts and critiques of domestic violence, Mexican American men as well as Anglo writers of both genders have also represented domestic violence against Mexican American women in multifaceted and significant ways. The iterations of this are fascinating. One can represent oneself, one can be represented by others, and/or one can self-fashion a representation in response to others’ interpretations. What this means for my project is that I have taken into account the ways that Mexican Americans represent themselves through testimonio, historical

romance, and motherwork. However, I have also probed the ways that Anglo and Mexican American men writers have constructed Mexican American women as sexually deviant and deserving of domestic violence. Most importantly, my project has described the ways that Mexican American women have taken *those* representations and subverted them through their critiques of violence and imperialism. For instance, in *The Squatter and the Don*, Ruiz de Burton constructs Mercedes as beyond reproach—a virginal Castilian. In another case, Gloria Anzaldúa reverses the charges of cultural betrayal, showing that her people have already betrayed her symbolically in denying her sexuality and identity. Recovering these identities is a way for the writers to create their own Chicana feminism.

The recovery of identity is the third significant point of my project. As Chicana feminism developed, writers and thinkers searched for ways to make theory and praxis part of everyday lives. I have found through my research that one of the ways theory and praxis manifest is through literary motherwork. I would be remiss if I did not reiterate that motherwork does not have to be done by a mother; rather it is part of community survival in the face of violence from outside the community and from within the home. Again, there is homology occurring here. As earlier, I described the similarities in the structures of violence within the home and the nation, throughout the dissertation, I describe how gender itself constitutes a category in which public and private actions enact violence against women. By revealing this violence, women do motherwork and confront the additional violence they might draw as whistleblowers.

These conclusions serve to underscore the most salient point that weaves throughout this dissertation—domestic violence, whether literal or literary, is not isolated

as a private problem within the home; instead, domestic violence tells us another story about the social and historical conditions that have sanctioned violence against people while suggesting that they are part of the US family and still outside of it. There are multiple paths for further scholarship in this realm. I anticipate taking the lessons of motherwork, activism, and domestic violence to expand into the area of environmental and bodily contamination. The act of motherwork shows how it is a defense of community, family, and personhood; however, as I expand this work, it becomes a way to examine the complicity environmental contamination at the same time there is resistance to it. The body functions as a material site for resistance in Chicana/o texts. Yet, while some of the texts do recognize the damage to the Chicano body, most writers, men and women, locate environmental and political degradation on the Chicana body. The turn to the body as part of theory construction in Chicana feminist discourse allows the reader to see how the body can function as allegory within a text and as a site of resistance to Chicano and Anglo patriarchy and rejection of Anglo feminist values that do not include the overlapping identities within the Chicana body.

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