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(Dis)Claiming *Mestizofilia*: Chicana/os Disarticulating Euromestizaje

By

Agustín Palacios

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Spring 2012

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Abstract

(Dis)Claiming *Mestizofilia*: Chicana/os Disarticulating *Euromestizaje*

by

Agustín Palacios

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Laura E. Pérez, Chair

This dissertation investigates the development and contradictions of the discourse of mestizaje in its key Mexican ideologues and its revision by Mexican American or Chicana/o intellectuals. Great attention is given to tracing Mexico's dominant conceptions of racial mixing, from Spanish colonization to Mexico's post-Revolutionary period. Although mestizaje continues to be a constant point of reference in U.S. Latino/a discourse, not enough attention has been given to how this ideology has been complicit with white supremacy and the exclusion of indigenous people.

Mestizofilia, the dominant mestizaje ideology formulated by white and mestizo elites after Mexico's independence, proposed that racial mixing could be used as a way to "whiten" and homogenize the Mexican population, two characteristics deemed necessary for the creation of a strong national identity conducive to national progress. Mexican intellectuals like Vicente Riva Palacio, Andrés Molina Enríquez, José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio proposed the remaking of the Mexican population through state sponsored European immigration, racial mixing for indigenous people, and the implementation of public education as a way to assimilate the population into European culture. I argue that although Mexican Americans inherited this Eurocentric formulation of mestizaje, by the mid-1960s their specific social position as a negatively racialized and economically exploited population in the United States allowed self-identified Chicana/o activists and intellectuals to depart significantly from, and in some cases, clearly critique inherited Eurocentric conceptions of racial mixing and racist views of indigenous people.

Chicano/a discourse of mestizaje and indigeneity is not an uncritical reproduction of dominant Mexican *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo*, it is a collective, and sometimes deeply personal, exploration of mixed race ancestry that sought to recuperate, and in some cases, center the indigenous. Chicano/as' historical and practical context made some of their claims to indigeneity, including those dealing with spirituality, not only oppositional, but also decolonizing. Through an interdisciplinary approach grounded in Chicano/a studies, this study critically examines a broad array of texts by Mexican and Chicana/o intellectuals, including political speeches, historical texts, and literature.

Dedication

To the memory of Alfred Arteaga (1950 – 2008), and to all the women who have nurtured and guided me, including Professor Laura E. Pérez, my mom Rosa López, *mi nana* Oliva Luna, and *mi amorcito corazón* Alejandra Oseguera.

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First and foremost I must recognize the Chair of my committee, Laura E. Pérez, for her guidance, support, and encouragement during this arduous process. I am grateful for all her constructive criticisms, edits, and for not giving up on me, even when I was ready to give up on myself.

I will also like to thank the other members of my committee, Professor Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Professor José Rabasa, for all their comments and ideas. Although they both had moved to work with, and inspire, students at other universities, they did not abandon me in this project. I also need to thank my mentor Alfred Arteaga, who from 2001 to his passing in 2005 helped me in more ways that I can mention. His passion for life and poetry continues to inspire me.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my family and friends. My wife Alejandra has always been supportive, without her taking care of our two children while I sneaked away to work on my dissertation, I would never had finished. And to my life-long best friend José López, who was always ready to listen to my ideas. Lastly, to my mother, compared to the amount of work and sacrificed she gave to raise my sister and me, writing a dissertation is no big deal.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Chicana/o (Dis)Claiming of Mestizofilia

Mestizofilia, a term coined by contemporary Mexican historian Agustín Basave Benítez (1992), refers to the nationalist ideology formulated by white and mestizo elites after Mexico's independence. This ideology proposed that racial mixing could be used as a way to "whiten" and homogenize the Mexican population, two characteristics deemed necessary for the creation of a strong national identity and national progress. Although Mexican Americans inherited this Eurocentric formulation of mestizaje in the 19th and early 20th century, by the Civil Rights era their specific social position as a negatively racialized and economically exploited population in the United States allowed Chicana/o activists and intellectuals to depart significantly from, and in some cases, clearly critique inherited Latin American but still Eurocentric conceptions of racial mixing and racist view of indigenous people, dark "mixed" people, and other "people of color." Chicanos/as of the 1960s and 1970s both claimed and disclaimed Mexico's official discourses of mestizaje.¹

This dissertation traces the dominant configurations of cultural and biological mixing, referred to in Latin America since Spanish colonization as *mestizaje*, in the work of Mexican and Chicano/a intellectuals. By interrogating this transnational intellectual history, this dissertation seeks to make a critical intervention into contemporary Chicana/o and U.S. Latina/o discourse on mestizaje and indigeneity. This discursive history entailed the examination of a broad array of texts, including political speeches, historical texts, and literature.

Historically, "Chicana/o" refers to the political and cultural identity that emerged out of the Chicano/a Movement(s) of the 1960s and 70s. An important sector of Chicana/o intellectuals not only actively rejected Anglo-centric assimilation, but they did so by proposing a re-valorization of Mexican and indigenous history and culture, while affirming the civil and human rights of people of Mexican descent in the United States.² Chicano/a historians re-interpreted Mexican and United States history in ways that included the voices and experiences of previously marginalized and racialized groups, particularly those of indigenous and Mexican descent. As Chicana scholar Norma

¹ The *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law* (1996) defines disclaim as: "to reject or relinquish a claim to (as an interest in an estate)" and disclaimer as "a refusal or disavowal of something that one has a right to claim; *specif*: a relinquishment or formal refusal to accept an interest or estate" (140 - 141).

² Although the terms "Chicana" and "Chicano" have at times been used as synonyms for Mexican American, in this dissertation I use them to refer to those who self-identify as Chicana/o and who hold a political position critical of forced assimilation and U.S. racism. In their *Dictionary of Mexican American History* (1981), Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera defined "Chicano" as a "controversial term made popular by activists in the 1960s referring to Mexican Americans and especially to those who demonstrate a militant pride in their ethnicity" (83).

Alarcón notes in her essay “Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of ‘The’ Native Woman” (1990):

The appropriation and recodification of the term Chicano from the oral culture was a stroke of insight precisely because it unsettled all of the identities conferred by previous historical accounts. . . . Thus, the demand for a Chicano/a history became a call for the recovery and re-articulation of the record to include the stories of race/class relations of the silenced, against whom the very notions of being Mexican or not-Mexican, being American or not-American, being a citizen or not a citizen had been constructed. (63-64)

For *movimiento* era Chicana scholars like María Linda Apodaca, this meant retelling women’s historical roles in ways that did not reaffirm the racism and/or sexism of patriarchal nationalist narratives like those sometimes found in *el movimiento*. In her 1977 essay, “The Chicana Woman: An Historical Materialist Perspective,” Apodaca included class in the analysis of gender and sexual oppression of Chicanas, an oppression that also translated into exclusion from the historical record:

The two basic factors discouraging [historical] analysis of the Chicana are (1) a class society based on private property with the need for inheritance and (2) male chauvinism. Interestingly enough, these two aspects not only discourage analysis, but in the real world are the material and ideological basis for the subjugation of women and other working-class people. (72)

Besides the “recovery and re-articulation” of Mexican and Chicano/a history, the Chicano Movement(s) also marked a distinct break with previous forms of Mexican American political engagement. Chicano/a activists, like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, abandoned the tried-and-failed strategy of claiming whiteness as a way to circumvent Jim Crow-styled practices, and instead focused on formulating a mestizo-identified nationalism that could challenge U.S. racist notions of purity and the presumed superiority of European values.³

Although some Chicanas/os misread or uncritically appropriated Mexican intellectuals’ formulation of *mestizaje*, most notably that of José Vasconcelos, they nevertheless articulated *mestizaje* as a counter-stance to the United States’ disdain of racial and cultural mixing. Chicano/a discourse(s) thus pitted Mexico’s more inclusive, albeit racist, nationalist logic against the United States’ exclusionary nationalism built on legalized segregation and exclusion of non-whites. This move would eventually lead a critical mass of Chicano/a activists, artists and intellectuals to articulate a critical “mixed-blood” indigeneity concerned with forging coalitions with other indigenous people.⁴

Chicanas/os of the mid-1960s and 1970s appropriated aspects of Mexico’s mestizo ideology to forge a nationalism that would help them mobilize Mexican

³ Gonzales is the author of the well-known epic poem *I am Joaquin* (1967). He is also one of the main organizers of the civil rights campaign “Crusade for Justice,” the 1969 National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, and La Raza Unida Party. Chapter five of this dissertation discusses this move.

⁴ For a recent useful formulation regarding coalition see Pérez’s “Enrique Dussel’s *Ética de la liberación*, U.S. Women of Color Decolonizing Practices, and Coalitionary Politics amidst Difference” (2010) and María Lugones’ *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (2003).

Americans in their struggle against economic exploitation, cultural oppression, and political exclusion. As Chicano scholar Alfred Arteaga pointed out, mestizaje became an opportunity to “consider Indianness, Europeanness, and mestizo-ness as perspective bound, politically weighted mental constructs” (17). For some Chicanos, mestizaje was a malleable ideology capable of forging an oppositional identity that would withstand U.S. racism. The Chicano Movement came to envision, in the words of poet Alurista, a “Red Mestizo Nation” comprised of “a Red People with a Red Culture” (*Nationchild Plumaroja* 3). In the face of Latin American and U.S. racial hierarchies, the Chicana/o identification with their own indigeneity and the colonized indigenous or “Amerindia” was a significant decolonial move.⁵ The identification with indigeneity, instead of the mandate to repress and repudiate indigenous ancestry and culture, and the re-valorization of previously excluded non-Western epistemologies became a crucial opportunity to exorcise the internalized racism and self-policing first set in place by European colonialism. With respect to Chicana artists, Laura E. Pérez writes:

The conscious identification with politically marginalized and differently spiritual knowledges that bicultural Chicana/os hold alongside many, many other peoples is hardly nostalgic or reproductive of detrimental racist essentialisms as progressives fear: it is part of a broader attempt to decisively interrupt the dream of capitalist and imperialist civilizations and see *más allá*, beyond the present structurings of personal, communal, global, and cosmic relations that benefit crucially from our exile from the field of spiritual discourse. (“Spirit Glyphs” 42)

The move by some Chicana/os to acknowledge, reconnect to, and/or revitalize their indigenous culture and spirituality was often misunderstood and distrusted by some Chicana/o leaders who saw (or see) cultural autonomy as secondary (or the result of) economic and political liberation.⁶

Mexico’s official conception of mestizaje, the product of a long discursive history and perhaps most familiarly identified with José Vasconcelos, has been deeply intertwined with racist conceptions of the human.⁷ This enduring legacy is evident today

⁵ Laura E. Pérez makes a similar observation regarding Chicana artists’ revalorization of indigenous spirituality: “From the point of view of many Chicana artists whose work is consciously constructed through reference to the spiritual, the struggle for the valorization of world views that dominant culture imagine as non-Western, and thus other, is a decolonizing one not only for the colonized, but also for the colonizer... .” (“Spirit Glyphs” 39).

⁶ For a discussion of the different ideological divisions within the Chicano Movement, including the split between cultural nationalism and Marxism, see Carlos Muñoz’s chapter three, “The Rise of the Chicano Student Movement and Chicano Nationalism,” in *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*.

⁷ A number of scholars have pointed to the anti-indigenous and anti-African racism that has informed some of Latin American dominant perceptions of racial mixing, including Martin S. Stabb (1959), Nicandro F. Juárez (1972), Alan Knight (1990), Nancy Leys Stepan (1991), Marilyn Grace Miller (2004), Kelley R. Swarthout (2004), and Manuel Vargas (2004). In this dissertation I aim to contribute a more nuanced look at the ways that this mestizaje discourse interacted with Chicana/o own construction of

in the work of U.S. Latino intellectuals who see in mestizaje the solution to racism and social balkanization.⁸ This dissertation aims to make clear why these Eurocentric conceptions of mestizaje are not radical as they are sometimes portrayed to be. Dominant nationalist discourses of mestizaje such as Vasconcelos' and his followers, will not eradicate racism and white supremacy in the U.S., just as these have not led to racial equality in Latin America.

Both in the 19th and early 20th century, Mexican elites concerned with nation building discursively constructed mestizos as Mexico's ideal citizens. They presumed that mestizos were at a mid-point between the more advanced European, and the culturally, and ostensibly biologically, backward Indian. Laura E. Pérez has called this socially and culturally Darwinian formulations of racial mixing "Euromestizaje," "theories of 'racial' or ethnic and cultural hybridity that maintained European and Euro-American cultural and physical standards as measuring sticks of progress and beauty and thus remained Eurocentric" ("Enrique Dussel" 128). This Eurocentrism informed the work of José Vasconcelos and other Mexican ideologues that shaped a highly problematic and contradictory discourse of mestizaje, one that would be unwittingly reference by Chicana/os.

Disciplining Mixed Race Bodies

In Mexico, "whites"⁹ and European-identified mestizo elites made use of state power to socially and politically marginalize indigenous people, Africans, and poor mestizos from the imagined national community, even while cementing the nation through discourses of mestizaje.¹⁰ From this perspective, Mexico's official nation-building discourse of mestizaje can be understood as part of what Michel Foucault called "governmentality,"¹¹ a government's attempt to create 'well behaved' citizens by

mestizaje and indigeneity, in particular, I am interested in the ways that Chicana/os challenge mestizo anti-indigenous racism and sought to recuperate and/or reconstruct Chicano/a indigeneity while being conscious of their mixed racial and cultural heritage.

⁸ For example, in *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans, and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America*, Gregory Rodriguez argues that "Mexican Americans are forcing the United States to reinterpret the concept of melting pot to include racial as well as ethnic mixing.... Just as the emergence of the mestizos undermined the Spanish racial system in colonial Mexico, Mexican Americans, who have always confounded the Anglo American racial system, will ultimately destroy it, too" (xvii).

⁹ In their writing, intellectuals like Justo Sierra (1848 – 1912), Andrés Molina Enriquez (1868 – 1940), and José Vasconcelos did make a distinction between "indios" "mestizos" and "blancos." The term "blancos" was often used as an umbrella term for Europeans.

¹⁰ Anderson defines the nation as an "imagined political community," "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). For more on national identities see Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

¹¹ "Governmentality" is a neologism created by Michel Foucault to describe the many ways the State, through its institutions, shapes the ways that populations understand

conditioning people's self-understanding through notions of citizenship, law, and morality. In this way, the state structures citizens' fields of possible action and limits the pathways of resistance. As I will discuss further in chapter one, the colonization of the Americas was also effected discursively through the rationalization of practices that propagated the idea of *colonizable subjects*. The Spanish constructed indigenous people as being *in need* of 'salvation.'¹² After Independence in 1821, criollo and mestizo elites continued to organize society through a racial hierarchy, one that continued to code indigenous and African bodies as primitive subjects who were dependent on those who were supposed to be more spiritually and culturally developed/modern.

The terms "Indio," "mestizo" and "mestizaje" refer to racial and cultural ideological constructs that originated during the Spanish colonization of the American continent, and which later became incorporated into nationalist ideologies after Independence from Spain. As Mexican historian Agustín Basave Benítez points out, "Criollos y mestizos, liberales y racistas, positivistas y románticos llegan a la idéntica conclusión: el mestizaje es la esencia de la mexicanidad" (*México mestizo* 141).¹³ In the dominant nationalist narrative elaborated and circulated in the works of prominent intellectuals such as Andrés Molina Enriquez, José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, mestizos are Mexico's ideal citizens, to the exclusion of indigenous people and people of African descent. Advocating for racial mixing did not in itself mean that the ideology of mestizaje was anti-racist, as many Chicanas/os with little knowledge of the genealogy of these mestizo discourses assumed from their civil rights cultural horizon. To the contrary, when racial mixing is prescribed as a solution to the presumed evolutionary backwardness of indigenous people, racial mixing was a clearly racist and eugenicist ideology informed by social Darwinism (see Stepan 41).

Mexico's Independence of 1821 did not undo the racial, class, gender and sexual hierarchies established by European colonization, as I will show in chapter three. Indigenous people continued to occupy a subaltern colonial position in relation to mestizos, and many mestizos continue to adhere to Eurocentric ideals of race, class,

and regulate themselves. Although Foucault did not refer to Latin American nations, I find his term useful because it helps me understand how the new independent states sought to establish a new social order, that in a lot of ways, continued colonial patterns. See Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, edited by Arnold I. Davidson, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹² The Requerimiento of 1513, which the crown decreed had to be read to indigenous people before they were to be colonized, presumably justified their enslavement if they resisted. This colonial decree, and other like it, officially constructed indigenous people as colonizable subjects and their colonization justified because they were not Christians. For a discussion of the Requerimiento and the role Christianity during colonization, see José Rabasa's *Without History: Subaltern Studies, The Zapatista Insurgency, and the Specter of History* (2010) as well as his more recent book, *Tell Me the Story of How I Conquered You: Elsewheres and Ethnosuicide in the Colonial Mesoamerican World* (2011).

¹³ "Creoles and mestizos, liberals and racists, positivists and romantics come to the identical conclusion: mestizaje is the essence of Mexicaness" (my translation).

gender, and sexuality. After Mexico's independence, still Eurocentric notions of mestizaje began to be conceived as the defining element of Mexican national identity, understood as a cultural and biological essence that defined what was Mexican and what was not. Among the most influential proponents of this nationalist ideology, or *mestizofilia*, were: Francisco Pimentel (1823–1893), Vicente Riva Palacio (1832–1896), Justo Sierra Méndez (1848–1912), Andrés Molina Enríquez (1868–1940), José Vasconcelos (1882–1959) and Manuel Gamio (1883–1960). Some of these intellectuals occupied government posts during the reign of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911); a period marked by some of the most aggressive government policies of land dispossession and indigenous genocide (Knight 1990). *Mestizofilia* discourses constructed mestizaje as evolution for the indigenous population because it “whitened” them by introducing the blood of the ostensibly superior white “race.” According to Basave Benítez,

La mestizofilia puede definirse, en su más amplia connotación, como la idea de que el fenómeno de mestizaje—es decir, la mezcla de razas y/o culturas—es un hecho deseable. En particular, la tesis mestizófila de Andrés Molina Enríquez... parte de la premisa de que los mestizos de México... son los mexicanos por antonomasia, los auténticos depositarios de la mexicanidad, y pretende mostrar histórica y “socioetnológicamente” que México no puede convertirse en una nación desarrollada y próspera mientras no culmine su proceso de mestizaje y logre homogeneizar en lo étnico la población mediante la fusión racial de las minorías de indios y criollos en la masa mestiza.¹⁴ (*México Mestizo* 13)

Basave's term is useful because it situates the historically and culturally specific ideological manifestation of mestizaje discourse embedded within Mexico's official nationalism, and it also may be read as capturing the anxiety of white and European-identified mestizo elites negotiating the reality of racial mixture. The term *mestizofilia* marks the adherence to white supremacy of Mexico's elites. Further, as I will show in chapter three, *mestizofilia* was also a patriarchal discourse that overtly masculinized the mestizo, at the same time that it constructed the Indian as its feminized other.

The Mexican nationalism formulated before and after the Revolution of 1910 sought to construct the “mestizo” as a stable and finalized national identity, as shown in chapter four. Influenced by Comtean *Positivism*, it was believed that national progress went hand-in-hand with the development of a homogenous population of a singular identity. In *Forjando Patria* (1916), for example, Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio looked to European nations, in particular Germany and France, for models of nationalism. He exalted the process of mestizaje as an: “avanzada y feliz fusión de razas,

¹⁴ “Mestizophilia can be defined, in its broadest connotation, as the idea that the phenomena of mestizaje—that is, the mixing of races and/or cultures—is a desirable act. In particular, the mestizophilic thesis of Andrés Molina Enríquez... departs from the premise that Mexico's mestizos... are the Mexicans by antonomasia, the authentic depositories of mexicaness, and [he] attempts to demonstrate historically and ‘socioethnologically’ that Mexico cannot become a developed and prosperous nation until the process of mestizaje culminates and ethnically homogenizes the population through the racial fusion of Indians and Creole minorities into the mestizo mass” (my translation).

[que] constituye la primera y más sólida base del nacionalismo” (7).¹⁵ Gamio believed that key to successful nationalism and the creation of a “patria,” fatherland, was: 1) racial homogeneity, 2) a common national language, and 3) a common culture (8). Therefore, to eliminate Mexico’s heterogeneity, it was thought necessary to incorporate indigenous people through cultural and/or biological *mestizaje*. In *México Profundo* (1987), Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla would later critique this process of subject creation:

The new nation was conceived as culturally homogeneous, following the dominant European conviction that a state is the expression of a people with a common culture and the same language and is produced by having a common history. Thus, consolidating the nation was the goal of all groups contending power. (63)

After the Revolution of 1910-1918, Mexican intellectuals set themselves the task of “identifying,” or “defining” *lo mexicano*: the unique characteristics of the nation that constituted “mexicanness” or the nation’s “soul.” But even as it investigated and appropriated the “Aztec” past as a national treasure, mestizo-nationalism continued to reinforce white supremacy when it conceptualized indigenous people as a primitive antecedent and building block to a modern national identity. The *Indigenismo* of this era was reflected in various public realms, including monuments to indigenous heroes such as Cuauhtemoc, the murals of Diego Rivera, and the ethnological studies of Manuel Gamio and Alfonso Caso. It must be emphasized that *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* are complementary ideologies, two sides of the same national coin. Just as Europeans first constructed their whiteness in opposition to a non-white Indian other (Rabasa 1993), the social construction of the mestizo was built in opposition to the Indian.¹⁶

Chicanos/as of the 1960s and 70s turned to Mexican history, literature, and scholarship as a way to confront the negative portrayal of Mexican people and culture prevalent in Eurocentric U.S. popular culture and academia. But some, in their rush to challenge U.S. racism, reproduced Mexican nationalist ideology without proper analysis. Most notable and disturbing in Chicano discourse was the uncritical incorporation of Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos’ seemingly benign notion of the “cosmic race,” constructed as it was in dialogue with Eurocentric racism and Eugenics. As will be discussed in chapter four, Vasconcelos understood *mestizaje* as a process of biological synthesis that would eventually culminate in a superior “cosmic race.” When considering Vasconcelos’ writings as a whole, including his little known 1940 work as editor of a pro-Nazi magazine *El Timón*, it is apparent that Vasconcelos never envisioned a place for

¹⁵ “advanced and happy racial fusion, [that] constitutes the first and most solid basis of nationalism” (My translation).

¹⁶ The work of Miguel León-Portilla (1926 – present), and others of his generation, would greatly influence Chicano/a understanding of indigenous culture, as evidence in their inclusion in Chicano/a anthologies. Although beyond the scope of this dissertation, León-Portilla’s intervention into *indigenismo* provided a more complex view of native culture than that of Manuel Gamio, and certainly, a far more respectful representation than that of José Vasconcelos.

indigenous people as such in the Mexican nation.¹⁷ His nationalist ideology of *mestizaje* coded indigenous people as primitive, while figuring indigenous people as stepping-stones to a more “evolved” *mestizo* body. The centrality of *mestizaje* discourse in contemporary Chicano and Latino thought and politics has made deconstructing its ideological roots and the work of José Vasconcelos, in particular, necessary.

The Racialization of Mexicans in the United States

Mexican Americans’ ambivalent relationship with whiteness and indigeneity has been complicated by the existence of an oppressive racial hierarchy that upholds whiteness at the expense of people of color, including Native and African Americans. After the US-Mexico War of 1848 claims to both whiteness and *mestizaje* were strategically used by Mexican Americans to escape Jim Crow’s¹⁸ racial discrimination, much in the same way that seventeenth century indigenous people had sought access to the “*mestizo*” category to escape tribute obligations and forced labor. Thus, Chicano discourse surrounding *mestizaje* and indigeneity must be examined from within the social-historical reality in which it is articulated. Soon after the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846-1848, both state and local governments passed laws designed to dispossess and disenfranchise Mexican Americans based on the perception that they were not white. While the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted U.S. citizenship to Mexicans, U.S. state laws limited citizenship only to Mexicans who could prove they were “white.” In California, for example, Martha Menchaca points out:

In 1849 a person with one-half or more Indian blood was considered non-White and a person one-eighth or more Black a *mulatto*, since it was a well-known fact that most Mexicans were of Indian descent. In 1851 the blood quantum for being White became more restrictive, as people of one-fourth Indian descent were considered non-White... (*Recovering History* 221)

Laws such as the 1855 California Anti-Vagrancy Act, also known as “the Greaser law,” forced Mexicans to work for white settlers, while the “Squatters law” of 1850 made squatting on Mexican American lands legal. The practice of lynching Mexicans was common during the first decades after colonization; historians William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb point out that “[b]etween 1848 and 1928, mobs lynched at least 597 Mexicans” (413).¹⁹ Some of the complexity and ambiguity of José Vasconcelos’ writing, which can be described as simultaneously anti-imperialist and Eurocentric, is perhaps traceable to his direct experiences during the formative years of his childhood, 1890–

¹⁷ For more on Vasconcelos Nazi involvement, see Itzhak Bar-Lewaw’s *La Revista “Timón” y José Vasconcelos* (1971).

¹⁸ Jim Crow refers to state and local laws enacted right after the U.S. Civil War that legalized racial segregation, voter suppression, and other forms of discrimination against people of color, particularly, against African Americans.

¹⁹ For an in-depth discussion of lynching in the U.S. Southwest, see Ken Gonzales-Day’s *Lynching in the West: 1850 – 1935* (2006), appendix 1 provides a list of lynching and summary executions.

1897, when his family lived in Texas,²⁰ a period that Vasconcelos would later characterize as marked by “race hatred.”²¹

By the time the United States incorporated Mexico’s northern territories after the war, Mexico had officially abolished slavery and granted, theoretically, citizenship to all its population regardless of race.²² Martha Menchaca points out that in comparison to Mexico, the United States’ racial policies were “less liberal,” since the state “conferred full citizenship rights on ‘free whites’ only” (586). The United States federal government was willing to consider some mestizos and Mexicans of Spanish descent as white. Immediately after the war, the new territories and states passed laws to deny citizenship to poor mestizo and Mexican Indians (who had previously migrated from the interior of Mexico), as well as to Native Americans. The 1849 California constitution, for example, explicitly stated that only “White male citizens of the United States, and every White male citizen of Mexico, who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States... shall be entitled to vote at all elections . . .”²³ In *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race*, Laura Gómez notes that although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted federal citizenship to Mexicans, there was a significant difference between federal and state citizenship. In an 1828 precedent surrounding citizenship, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall made clear that federal citizenship did not mean access to state *political* citizenship: “Federal citizenship extended the protections of the Constitution and provided a ‘shield of nationality’ abroad, but it did not convey political rights. Instead, political rights stemmed only from being a citizen of a *state*” (Gómez 44). American legislators often argued that even though the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had granted Mexicans *federal* citizenship, most Mexicans were primarily Indian, and therefore, unqualified to receive *state* citizenship.²⁴

The history of race in the U.S. southwest can be conceptualized as the layering of colonial racial systems: the first layer made by the Spanish colonial racialization, followed by the English racialization of Native Americans. Gómez calls this confluence

²⁰ Juárez dates Vasconcelos’ stay in Eagle Pass, Texas, from 1890 to 1897. When Vasconcelos was 13 years old, the family moved to Mexico City.

²¹ “El odio de raza, los recuerdos del cuarenta y siete, mantenían el rencor. Sin motivo, y sólo por el grito de ‘greaser’ o de ‘gringo,’ solían producirse choques sangrientos” (Vasconcelos *Ulises Criollo*- 21).

²² Although the recognition of full citizenship was often denied by racist state officials who wanted to perpetuate an exploitative plantation system which made use of indigenous labor. In practice, the full benefits of citizenship were only available to assimilated indigenous people.

²³ Quoted in Menchaca “Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States,” p. 588.

²⁴ “For example, the 1849 California Constitution gave the right of suffrage only to white males of Mexican descent. In New Mexico, the 1850 constitution gave the vote to all whites and to the Pueblo Indians, but in 1853 the US Congress rescinded the Pueblos’ voting rights. Arizona was originally under the laws of New Mexico and later, in 1863, adopted a constitution similar to that of California, which only granted voting rights to white Mexicans. Texas limited citizenship status to whites and to Mexicans who were not black or Indian” (Bedolla, *Latino Politics* 42).

of both United States and Mexican racial systems as “double colonization.” “Double colonization meant that the various racial groups who inhabited the region in the mid-nineteenth century were forced to navigate two different racial regimes simultaneously” (47). This meant that upper class light-skinned mestizos had the option of adopting a second class whiteness and citizenship, while dark-skinned Mexicans were relegated to a lower racial status without citizenship: “The lure of whiteness proved an ideal tool. With it, the American colonizers could, in one move, co-opt Mexican Americans willing to trade on their mestizo, part-European heritage and divide Mexican Americans from their Pueblo neighbors” (Gómez 113). Many took the bait, and mestizo elites distanced themselves from Native Americans and African Americans, in the process, fabricating a pure Spanish ancestry. Even though the passage of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, in 1868, rescinded states’ right to grant or deny citizenship, and declared all people born in the United States citizens by birth-right, the new law excluded Native Americans (“Indians”). This meant that darker skin Mexican mestizos and Mexican indigenous people continued to be denied citizenship (Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism” 592).

A case in point is the naturalization case *In re Rodriguez* (1897), in which Ricardo Rodriguez, a Mexican immigrant, had applied to become a naturalized citizen in the state of Texas. The state denied his request, stating that he was an Indian. Rodriguez challenged the dismissal and took the case to the San Antonio Circuit Court. The attorney representing the naturalization board argued the following:

I challenge the right of the applicant to become a citizen of the United States, on the ground that he is not a man or person entitled to be naturalized.... [The] applicant is a native-born person of Mexico, 38 years old, and of pure Aztec or Indian race.... The population of Mexico comprises about six million Indians of unmixed blood, nearly one-half of whom are nomadic savage tribes, Now it is clear...from the appearance of the applicant, that he is one of the 6,000,000 Indians of unmixed blood ... (qtd. in Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism” 595)

Texas argued that Rodriguez was an Indian, and therefore not eligible for citizenship. The appeal came down in favor of Rodriguez, which addressed the question of race by arguing that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had granted citizenship to Mexicans in the US; they were therefore “white by treaty.” This and other rulings did not specify that Mexicans were “racially” white, only that they needed to be treated as such. Mexican American’ claims to civil rights based on whiteness would need to be defended against local practices that classified them as non-white. As Ariela J. Gross points out:

Nevertheless, while a small elite of Mexican-American landholders who could prove that they were “Spanish” maintained white status, the majority of “Mexicans” were viewed and treated by Anglos as a separate race. Most “Mexicans” worked first on the railroads and then in agriculture. The mass of agricultural workers, like African Americans in the Southeast, were sharecroppers for white landlords, and they were excluded from schools, political institutions, and public accommodations. (Gross 341)

Wealth was no guarantee against Anglo political and economic encroachment, however, as even landowning Mexican Americans faced a rapid loss of political power and status

as their whiteness was eroded through policy. In contrast to the relatively quick political inclusion experienced by European immigrants, measures were taken to exclude Mexican Americans from political participation. In this hostile environment, claims to whiteness were a double-edged sword, however, as the state often granted the status of whiteness to Mexican Americans when it sought to dismiss their claims of racial discrimination. “As a strategy,” Gross observes, “whiteness was used against Mexican Americans far more often than on their behalf” (344). Examples of this ongoing racial discrimination include the de facto exclusion from juries, as well as residential and school segregation. In these cases, states could deny the existence of racial discrimination, since Mexican Americans were labeled as white, and argue that the exclusion was based on cultural grounds, which was allowed.

The discrimination of Mexican Americans would also be justified through claims of presumed cultural and intellectual inferiority. The widely read anthropologist Oscar Lewis argued throughout the 1950s and 1960s that Mexican and Puerto Rican families suffered from a “culture of poverty” that doomed their children to failure.²⁵ His claims reinforced the segregation of Mexican school children since it was argued that they needed this isolation so that they could be properly ‘Americanized.’ The sometimes ill-digested and hasty Chicano/a appropriation of Mexico’s official mestizo ideology must be understood, in great part, as a reaction to this history U.S. racism and cultural discrimination. In Mexican nationalist discourse, Chicanos/as found affirmations of their cultural and racial worth.

Between 1929 and 1954,²⁶ the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was the most vocal proponent of the politics of whiteness as a way to circumvent Jim Crow segregation and discrimination. During this time, LULAC often distanced Mexican Americans from other people of color, particularly African Americans, because it feared that their association might reinforce the idea that Mexicans were not white (Gross). In her study of Mexican Americans’ relation to whiteness, Ariela J. Gross gives as an example a 1936 LULAC-initiated injunction against the city of El Paso for classifying Mexicans as “colored” rather than “white.” Alonso Perales, the local LULAC leader, commented that Mexicans in El Paso “have always resented the inference that we are not whites” (Gross 362). Mexican Americans’ claims to whiteness had the negative consequence of affirming the existence of a racial hierarchy that negatively impacted other people of color, which included dark-skinned Mexicans.

By the late 1960s, however, it was clear for many activists that claims to whiteness as a strategy for national inclusion and equality had failed. Although the politics of whiteness had cushioned the Mexican population from the harshness of Jim Crow, it was clear that a more direct confrontation with racism and discrimination was

²⁵ See Oscar Lewis, *Five Families: Mexican case studies in the culture of poverty* (1959) and *La Vida: A Puerto Rican family in the culture of poverty* (1965).

²⁶ The League of United Latin American Citizens was founded in 1929. The year 1954 marks the successful civil rights case of Pete Hernández (*Hernandez v. Texas*), in which the Supreme Court ruled that Pete Hernández, although legally white, had been discriminated by an all-white jury that excluded Mexican Americans. LULAC and the American GI Forum (AGIF) were the main plaintiffs. See Bedolla’s *Latino Politics*, pp. 67 – 68.

necessary. Even though it is estimated that about 375,000 Mexican Americans served in World War II,²⁷ and many thousands fought in the Korean and Vietnam wars,²⁸ they were still subjected to racism, political exclusion, and even sanctioned violence in the United States.²⁹ The United States' denial of Mexican Americans' equality and full citizenship contributed to young Mexican Americans' desire to seek an alternative and oppositional identity, one now based on their non-white ancestry (Muñoz 2007).

(Dis)Articulating My Own Mixed “Race” Indigeneity

On October 2007 I attended, as an observer, the *First Encounter of Indigenous People of the Americas* held in Yaqui territory in the state of Sonora, Mexico. The *encuentro* had been organized by the Zapatistas, a Mayan guerrilla/political group, and by Mexico's National Indigenous Congress. The event gathered 537 indigenous delegates belonging to 52 indigenous nations/tribes from 12 different countries, including the United States and Canada.³⁰ Active participants and observers were asked to pre-register via the Internet. The registration form asked individuals and groups to either identify themselves as members of an indigenous nation (which would give them the right to speak at the event), or as observers (without the right to speak). As I was filling out the registration form, I hesitated about which box to check. Were Chicanos/as non-indigenous allies of the continent's indigenous people, or were Chicanos/as indigenous peoples also fighting for our decolonization? Why was answering this question so difficult? I did not hesitate when I had filled out the 2000 U.S. Census, and had marked the “Native American,” and not the “White” racial category. I was proud of my ‘defiance.’ I am part of that Chicano/a (sometimes spelled Xican@) generation that has been greatly influenced by indigenous-identified Chicanas/os like Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, Patrisia Gonzales, and Roberto Rodriguez; as well as by the work of movement-era writers like Alurista, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, and Luis Valdez. Their words had encouraged me to identify, non-apologetically, as indigenous, even if racially and culturally mixed. My great-grandfather was Huichol (Wixárika) and spoke his language (Wixaritari) fluently. My grandmother, on my mother's side, tells me a similar story. And yet, I know that identifying as Huichol for this event, would have been problematic as I do not have an ongoing tribal connection with those indigenous nations. Instead, for me “Chicano” and “Xicano” better reflect the experience of a working class second-generation Mexican American, whose own parents do not identify as indigenous. I understand myself as a de-tribalized and de-territorialized Chicano indígena, with all its contradictions. I finally decided to register as an indigenous individual, member of the

²⁷ Rodolfo Acuña puts the number between 375,000 – 500,000 (237).

²⁸ A recent film documentary by Laura Varela, *As long as I remember: American Veterans*, claims that Mexican Americans accounted for approximately 20 percent of U.S. casualties in Vietnam, despite comprising only 10 percent of the country's population. More than 80,000 Latinos/as fought in the Vietnam war.

²⁹ An example of this violence is the 1943 U.S. marines attack of Mexican American youth in the streets of L.A. The event was misleadingly named “Zoot Suit Riots,” even though it was US sailors who were responsible for most of the violence (Acuña 242).

³⁰ For these facts and for additional information, see the event's official website: <http://www.encuentroindigena.org/inicia/41>.

Chicano/a people. I would later receive an email that I had been reclassified as an “observer” by the people in-charge of the registration process. I felt rejected and confused. Had this been the choice of a few individuals, maybe mestizos who were handling the Internet registration process, and like my own parents, could not understand why a Chicano/a would claim to be indigenous? Or did it reflect the view of the Congreso Nacional Indígena, the Zapatistas, or the Yaqui? I do not know.

To my surprise, the organizers did welcome La Red Xicana Indígena³¹ as an indigenous organization. La Red sent two representatives, one of them was co-founder Rosalía Gonzalez.³² La Red was clear in pointing out that Chicanas/os are indigenous people who come from many different pueblos. The fact that Chicanos/as had been both allowed and denied the opportunity to participate *as* indigenous people speaks to the ambivalent and contradictory space Chicanos/as occupy in relation to Mexico’s and U.S.’s indigenous peoples. Even mestizo-identified Mexicans sometimes have trouble recognizing Chicanos/as as also Mexican (calling us “pochos”).³³ I realized that Chicana/o claims to indigeneity needed to be urgently explored if Chicanas/os are to build coalitions with other indigenous people.

I was first drawn to explore the connection between Mexico’s and Chicano/a ideological conceptions of mestizaje after reading Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, as an undergraduate. In her widely anthologized chapter, “*La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness*,” I noticed that she references José Vasconcelos as a source in her own conception of *mestiza consciousness*:

José Vasconcelos, Mexican philosopher, envisaged *una raza mestiza, una mezcla de razas afines, una raza de color—la primera raza síntesis del globo*. He called it a cosmic race, *la raza cósmica*, a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world. Opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity. ... From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization [sic], an “alien” consciousness is presently in the making—a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands. (99)

³¹ Funded in 2001, La Red Xicana Indígena is a U.S. based Chicana indigenous organization that has been an advocate in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) and in ENLACE (Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas). Other members of La Red Xicana Indígena include Chicana writer Cherríe Moraga and visual artists Celia Herrera Rodríguez.

³² Gonzalez is currently a Faculty Associate at the School of Social Work and the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences (Sociology), Arizona State University. She is also the elected Regional Co-Coordinator for North America within the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (2011-2014). Web. 4 Jan 2012.

< <https://webapp4.asu.edu/directory/person/475294>>.

³³ José Antonio Burciaga comments: “For Mexicanos from Mexico we were plain and simple *pochos*, spoiled fruit, the literal translation of the word. We had lost our *sabor*, our *Mexicanidad*” (52). See his creative essay, “Return to the Motherland,” in *Drink Cultura: Chicanismo*.

Although Anzaldúa emphasizes “consciousness” over “race,” her pairing of the word “synthesis” with “race” does not allow her to escape an association with biology. However, Anzaldúa was not making the case for biological evolution based on white supremacy, instead, she advocated for the creation of a feminist consciousness that would allow for the bringing together of distinct people and cultures. Despite Anzaldúa’s intentions, her call to create a new, and presumably better, consciousness through mestizaje and her evocation of Vasconcelos disturbingly—if unwittingly—reinvigorated the latter’s proposal that the mixing of different races would lead to the creation of a superior race. In the introduction to the anthology *Queering Mestizaje*, Alicia Arrizón rightly mentions that in order to engage with Anzaldúa’s conception of mestizaje “it is important to recognize that Vasconcelos is, despite his iconic stance, yet one more canonized male thinker that feminists, especially lesbians, confront with defiance while pushing for a transcultural/transnational feminism” (8). Anzaldúa’s writing was in this sense a confrontation with Vasconcelos and other Mexican intellectuals. For example, her choice to “ground” her Chicana identity, as she put it, “in the Indian’s woman history of resistance” would have been unthinkable to Vasconcelos (43). And, ultimately, Anzaldúa’s “reclamation of the feminist and queer subject” (Arrizón 8) stands in stark contrast to Vasconcelos’ patriarchal and chauvinistic conception of the “cosmic race.” Vasconcelos parroted racist European conceptions of people of color as overly determined by their bodies, and because he perceived them as lacking intelligence, they were unable to “regulate the lower zoological instincts, which are contrary to a truly religious conception of life” (*La Raza* 19–20). While Vasconcelos saw biological mestizaje as a filtering process that eliminated “inferior” racial traits and even racial groups, in contrast, Anzaldúa’s cultural and biological mestizaje does not necessitate the extinction of any race, instead, it proposes an openness to cultural mixing without patriarchy and homophobia:

What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—una cultura mestiza—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (44)

In other words, the new mestiza/o has the ability to bridge the separation between the races. In this respect, Anzaldúa’s work is conducive to coalitions with other indigenous people, despite being influenced by Vasconcelos’ mestizofilia.

The Chicano/a Heretical Reformulation of *Mestizofilia* and *Indigenismo*

An overview of late 1960s and 1970s Chicano literature, anthologies, and history textbooks shows the strong presence of, and critical engagement with, Mexican intellectuals such as José Vasconcelos, Leopoldo Zea, Carlos Fuentes, and Octavio Paz. In this section I analyze a few representative texts that reflect the presence of Mexican intellectuals in Chicano/a literature. Most insightful are the ways that editors of Chicano Studies anthologies framed the inclusion of Mexican intellectuals, as these helped me better understand how Chicana/os both appropriated and confronted Mexican thought to construct what they hoped was a liberatory, indeed decolonizing, discourse of mestizaje.

As a representative of the Revolutionary government, Vasconcelos sought to create a positive sense of national identity in a population that was largely mixed race and

indigenous. His public statements were often sprinkled with positive descriptions of indigenous people and culture, as well as with pride in Mexico's mixed heritage. It is these statements that made Vasconcelos appealing to Chicanos/as who were creating their own nationalist discourse. For example, both the Chicano Movement's "Plan de Santa Barbara" (1969) and the 1975 mission statement of San Francisco State University's La Raza Studies department³⁴ quoted Vasconcelos' acceptance speech as Rector to the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM): "At this moment I do not come to work for the university, but to demand that the university work for the people."³⁵ The motto of the student organization Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), "Por mi raza habla el espíritu," was taken directly from the National Autonomous University of Mexico's coat-of-arms, designed by Vasconcelos. It is not difficult to see why these words by a Mexican public intellectual would resonate with Chicanos/as struggling to institutionalize La Raza/Chicano studies departments. The seemingly contradictory Chicano/a references to Vasconcelos stem from his own vacillations and contradictions as someone who publicly represented himself as serving the Mexican people, at the same time that he showed disdain for them in his writings.

Although Vasconcelos is often uncritically referenced, one notable exception in early Chicano literature is the seminal critique by Nicandro F. Juárez, who in 1972 wrote "José Vasconcelos and La Raza Cósmica," published in the well-known and then newly-launched *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*.³⁶ Juárez succinctly observed:

La raza cósmica, in the final analysis, did not really reflect a sincere desire to have the racial traits of all peoples blended together. It was rather a hope that those traits Vasconcelos considered inferior would be absorbed and lost in the sea of genes of the superior types. Vasconcelos suggested that according to Mendel's Law, the racial mestizaje would be cleansed of its inferior genes. The magic word was absorption: the short types would be absorbed by the taller types, the dark by the lighter-in short, inferior types by superior types. The Blacks, by such means, would also be redeemed, as he put it, "... little by little, by voluntary extinction." (70)

Juárez points out that Vasconcelos' theories of racial mixing were partly based on the work of Gregor Mendel. Mendel's laws saw heredity as being composed by recessive and dominant traits. Vasconcelos absorbed the dominant Eurocentric "scientific" belief that "white" traits were dominant, and that those of people of color were inferior or recessive. As important as Juárez's analysis was, his critique was not cited or included in any of the anthologies I surveyed.

³⁴ On the founding and development of La Raza Studies at San Francisco State University see José B. Cuellar's "SFSU's La Raza Studies Paradigm: A Multidimensional Model for Multiethnic Latin@ Education Into Y2K."

³⁵ The *Plan de Santa Barbara* can be found in the appendix of Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*, 2nd edition, p. 236. For Vasconcelos' acceptance speech as rector of UNAM, see "Discurso con motivo de la toma de posesión del cargo de rector de la Universidad Nacional de México (1920)" *Discursos 1920 – 1950*. México: Ediciones Botas, 1950.

³⁶ The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press has published the journal since 1970.

In 1972 Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner edited and published the widely circulated *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (1972). In his introductory essay, “La Plebe,” Luis Valdez quotes José Vasconcelos’ well known statement on the mestizo/a: “We are Indian, blood and soul; the language and civilization are Spanish” (xvi).³⁷ In contrast to Vasconcelos, Valdez argued that even though mestizo/as are a “powerful blend of Indigenous America with European-Arabian Spain,” the culturally defining characteristic was indigenous, “basically Indio” (xv):

The presence of the Indio in La Raza is as real as the barrio. Tortillas, tamales, chiles, marijuana, la curandera, el empacho, el molcajete, atole, La Virgen de Guadalupe—these are hard-core realities of our people. These and thousands of other little human customs and traditions are interwoven into the fiber of our daily life. América Indígena is not ancient history. It exists today in the barrio, having survived even the subversive onslaught of the twentieth-century neon gabacho [Anglo] commercialism that passes for American culture. (“La Plebe” xv)

Furthermore, he argued that it was precisely Chicano/as’ indigenous-based culture that would help them in their liberation, since “the Chicano can no longer totally accept as reality the white, western European concept of the universe. Reason and logic are not enough to explain the modern world; why should it suffice to explain the ancient world of our ancestors?” (xxxix). For Valdez, it was the Eurocentric mentality that limited the ability to understand deeper truths: “The sciences of archeology and anthropology may unearth the buried ruins of América Indígena [sic] but they will never comprehend, through logic alone, its most basic truth: that man *is* a flower. For there is poetry in reality itself” (xxxix). Valdez understood the Western mind as trapped by a ‘flat’ or literal understanding of existence. In contrast, he attributed a more complex view of reality to the indigenous mind.³⁸ Nonetheless, Valdez concluded his essay paraphrasing Vasconcelos: “A new world race born of the racial and cultural blending of centuries. La Raza Cosmica [sic], the true American people” (xxxiv). The words “Cosmica” [sic] and “true” suggested that mestizos were a chosen people with a destiny to fulfill. Although Valdez had a more nuanced view of Mexican culture, both authors seem to share the problematic view that mixed race people have the duty to create a new world; and in the case of Vasconcelos, his omission of living indigenous people suggests that they will not be present in this future world. For Valdez, as with Anzaldúa, mestizaje represented the possibility of creating a non-racist society, one that did not sought to eliminate people of color. Whereas Vasconcelos could not envision a multiracial and multicultural society, for these Chicana/os, mestizaje was not a “whitening” process that would help the Indian progress and evolve, but about the creation of a non-Eurocentric consciousness.

³⁷ Valdéz does not provide the source of this quote, and I have not been able to find the original. The book by Claude Fell, *José Vasconcelos: los años del águila, 1920 – 1925* (1989) also uses the quote and attributes it to “El problema de México,” *Boletín de la SEP*, 1922: 514. The original reads: “indios somos por la sangre y por el alma; el lenguaje y la civilización son españoles” (qtd. in Fell 97).

³⁸ Luis Valdez often cited indigenous sources, including the Mayan books Popol Vuh and Chilam Balam, and works by Miguel León-Portilla on Nahuatl culture.

The anthology *Chicano Literature: Text and Context* (1972), edited by Antonia Castañeda Shular, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, and Joseph Sommers, also included works by noted Mexican intellectuals. In the section “Literatura de la Raza—The Context of Chicano Literature,” the first subsection is entitled “lo mexicano” [sic] and it includes excerpts from the work of José Vasconcelos, Leopoldo Zea, Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes. The inclusion of these texts is evidence that Chicano scholars sought to situate Chicano cultural production within a larger transnational context that would include Mexican history and culture. The editors wrote:

Who is the Chicano, how does he evaluate his past, what is the real meaning of his complex heritage, is his sense of identity a product primarily of cultural factors, or is it due more to socio-economic factors, or perhaps to *both* culture and class considerations. Ramos, Zea, Paz, and Fuentes—the lessons of Mexico—may be useful in this Chicano process. But the differences must also be defined and understood, and this must be done in the first place by Chicano writers and thinkers. (303)

The editors do not problematize that those who got to define Mexican identity were male and members of the elite. “What is the real Mexican heritage, what are the lessons of Mexican history what does it mean to say that Mexico is a mestizo nation, in what ways is the Mexican unique, in what ways like other Latin Americans, like all men?” (*Chicano Literature* 303). The excerpt from Vasconcelos’ “La Raza Cósmica” emphasized the need for an intellectual break with the United States and asserted the idea of a racial destiny. The editors’ introduction of the excerpt reads:

Among [Vasconcelos’] major themes are: 1) The need for unity of the Spanish-speaking nations in the face of United States power; 2) the need to validate the strength of the Iberian heritage, as against Anglo-Saxon traditions; 3) the importance of ideals such as liberty by comparison with material aims such as commerce; 4) the racial homogeneity of the United States as a weakness which ultimately will yield leadership to the new strength and new ideology of the great ethnic fusion of Latin America—la raza cósmica. (285)

The selection omits Vasconcelos’ most racist claims, such as, “in a few decades of aesthetic eugenics, the Black may disappear, together with the types that a free instinct of beauty may go on signaling as fundamentally recessive and undeserving, for that reason, of perpetuation” (*La raza* 32). The editors fail to point out that Vasconcelos advocacy for Spanish culture came at the expense of Mexican indigenous cultures. Instead, the three page excerpt selected by the editors of *Chicano Literature* includes a more inclusive view of race mixture, “All this to demonstrate that, ... we will arrive, in America sooner than elsewhere on earth, at the creation of a race made out of the treasure of all earlier ones, the final race, the cosmic race” (291). The reader is left with the perception that Vasconcelos envisioned a truly inclusive melting pot.

The section “lo mexicano,” included Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea’s “El indio.” The editors introduced the text by claiming that “[a]lthough Zea exaggerates when speaking of an absence of prejudice,” his ideas of mestizaje did represent those of the Mexican Revolution, which “coincide, in attitudes toward race, with Chicano thought today” (294). Zea represented Mexico as a harmonious society free of racial conflict, thanks to the process of mestizaje. Note the statement:

In Mexico to have Indian blood has never been the reason for insult. To be mestizo, bearing Indian blood together with Spanish, has never been degrading. Justo Sierra has spoken on behalf of the mestizo, judging him as the dynamic element in our history, as compared with the criollo, who always played a negative role, origin and source of all conservatism. (298)

Having Indian blood was not a problem, it seems, as long as one was mestizo. Also included in this section was Carlos Fuentes' "La herencia de Malinche," a text that personifies the voice of "Malinalli Tenépal" [sic] giving birth to the "first" mestizo. The editors introduced this piece as the "anguished and angry lament of La Malinche as she is about to give birth to the son of Cortés, a son who will be the first Mexican mestizo... heavy with militant and vengeful prophesy" (303). The opening lines of the excerpt state:

Oh, come out, son of mine, come out, come out between my legs... Come, son of betrayal... come, son of a whore... come out, hijo de la chingada... my beloved son, come out onto the land that no longer is mine or your father's, but yours... (305)

Fuentes figuratively dispossesses indigenous people, as the land now will belong to the mestizo son. The Indian mother here is a "whore" who willingly made herself sexually available to the conquistador, and even though the mestizo is an "hijo de la chingada," he is the beneficiary of these two opposing heritages. Eliding historical accuracy, Fuentes associated Malinche with treason and rape. La Malinche was also incorporated into Chicano/a literature, also as a symbolic mother, but for Chicana feminists, she did not represent a race traitor or a passive Indian woman. For example, in her 1977 poem "La Malinche"³⁹ Carmen Tafolla also writes from the persona of Malinche, but in contrast to Fuentes, Tafolla gives Malinche agency and the choice to create a new mestizo race:

But chingada I was not.
Not tricked, not screwed, not traitor.
For I was not a traitor to myself—
I saw a dream
and I *reached* it.
Another world.....
la raza.
la raaaaaa-zaaaaa... (2)

Tafolla's revision of La Malinche, a revision that writes over a previous revision, responds to the dominant Mexican and Chicano masculinist nationalist narratives with a feminist critique: "chingada I was not." However, her agency here translates into a willing sacrifice to create the mesizo. Although the poem ambiguously accepts the charge of treason, ultimately Malinche was "not a traitor" to herself, and thus suggests that Malinche should stand not as the humiliated Indian mother, but as the proud negotiating

³⁹ Tafolla's poem was first published in 1977 in the literary magazine *Tejidos*. It has been reprinted in a number of publications, including *Canto al Pueblo: An Anthology of Experiences*, ed. Leonardo Carrillo (1978), and most recently been reprinted in the anthology *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*, edited by Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero (1993).

mother of the mestizo.⁴⁰ Tafolla's remaking of the nationalist narrative should be read also as a defiant move to confront the limitations (i.e. patriarchy) of Mexican and Chicano mestizo nationalism. For Chicanas, the story of Malitzin Tenepal, like the concepts of mestizaje and Aztlán, became central sites of contestation where different voices vied for discursive authority as well as a discursive site from which Chicanas could challenge the patriarchal conceptions of nationalism.

The 1973 anthology *Introduction to Chicano Studies* (1st edition), edited by Livie Isauro Duran and H. Russell Bernard, entitled its introductory section "La Raza" and it also included excerpts from the work of José Vasconcelos and Octavio Paz, in addition to an excerpt from *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) by Chicano writer Armando Rendón. Duran and Bernard erroneously equate "La Raza Cósmica" with the people of Latin America:

Most of the members of *La Raza Cósmica* are mestizos, or mixtures of Indian and Spanish blood; but there are tens of millions of blacks (called *Negroes*), *mulattos* (mixture of black and Spanish genes), and *zambos* (the offspring of Indian and black matings). All these different people share in the history of Latin America and have contributed to its unique culture. They are all, therefore, part of *La Raza cósmica*, as are Cubans in Miami, Puerto Ricans in New York, and Chicanos in Aztlán. (4)

Duran and Bernard misrepresent Vasconcelos' *cosmic race* as a concept that describes Latin America's existing racial and cultural diversity (including the African), and not the homogeneous and superior race to come in a distant future, as first proposed by Vasconcelos. The excerpt by Vasconcelos constructs the mestizo as caught between two opposing peoples (Spanish and Indian), both representing a past order:

We have been at heart Spaniards even when we have had to fight against Spain, and we remain Indian even when our skin accidentally becomes whitened through marriage with the more recent Spanish stock. In this way the half-breed⁴¹ cannot entirely go back to his parents because he is not exactly as any of his ancestors; and being unable to connect fully with the past, the mestizo is always directed toward the future—is a bridge to the future.⁴² (qtd. in *Introduction to Chicano Studies* 11)

Vasconcelos endowed the mestizo with the historical mission of being a stepping-stone into the *cosmic race*.⁴³

The excerpt by Octavio Paz, "The Sons of La Malinche," was taken from the widely circulated and still cited *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950). Paz famously wrote on

⁴⁰ Mexican writer Rosario Castellanos had also reconfigured the image Malitzin Tenepal in her poem "Malinche" published in her 1972 poetry book, *Poesía No Eres Tú*.

⁴¹ The English version of the text uses "half-breed" instead of "mestizo." It is not clear to me whether the lecture was given in Spanish by Vasconcelos and then translated into English for the book, or if Vasconcelos gave the lecture in English. I was not able to locate an equivalent Spanish version of this text.

⁴² From "The Race Problem in Latin America," reprinted from José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio's *Aspects of Mexican Civilization* (1926), a book based on their lectures for the Harris Foundation, in Chicago.

⁴³ Chapter four of this dissertation provides a more in-depth discussion of Vasconcelos' work.

the association of Malitzin Tenepal/La Malinche as the symbolic indigenous mother, as “la chingada,” the raped indigenous woman. The historical figure referred to the indigenous woman who accompanied Cortés during the conquest of the Aztecs, and who served as translator. She also had a child with Cortés. “Who is the *Chingada*? Above all, she is the Mother. Not a mother of flesh and blood but a mythical figure. The *Chingada* is one of the Mexican representations of Maternity...” (20). Paz then went on to discuss the origins and multiple uses of word “chingar.” The word emphasizes violence (either physical or verbal), especially a sexual violence: “The *Chingada* is the Mother forcibly opened, violated or deceived. The *hijo de la Chingada* is the offspring of violation, abduction or deceit” (23). Paz seemed to suggest that for the Mexican, him included, the indigenous women existed only in the past as objects of Spanish sexual violence, but not as agents of history and not as living contemporaries.

In contrast to Paz, Adelaida R. Del Castillo’s 1974 essay “Malitzín Tenepal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective” provided a re-reading of the story of Malitzín Tenepal, who will be renamed as Doña Marina by the Spanish,

Doña Marina is significant in that she embodies effective, decisive action in the feminine form, and most important, because of her own actions syncretized two conflicting worlds causing the emergence of a new one—my own. Here, woman acts not as a goddess in some mythology, but as an actual force in the making of history. (122)

For Del Castillo, Malitzin Tenepal was co-creator of Mexican and Chicano/a reality. Del Castillo based much of her account on the chronicles of Spanish conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo.⁴⁴ In this account, “Malitzin was born into Aztec nobility,” but her mother secretly “sold her” to some Mayan merchants (123). She did this to prevent Malitzin from inheriting the family’s wealth and royal position, and instead passed these to Malitzin’s step-brother. Del Castillo understood this not only as a mother’s betrayal of her daughter, but also as a woman’s complicit enforcement of patriarchy. The Mexican nationalist narrative often omitted this first act of “treason” of Malitzin’s story, and instead constructed her as a traitor to her people. The story of Malitzin became a sort of patriarchal whip used to put Mexican and Chicanas in ‘their place.’⁴⁵ Although Del Castillo portrayed Malitzín Tenepal/Doña Marina as with agency and as consciously creating a new race/people, Bernal Díaz instead wrote that she only wished to serve her husband and Cortés:

... and said that God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and letting her bear a son to her lord and master Cortés and in marrying her to such a gentleman as Juan Jaramillo, who was now her husband. That she would rather serve her husband and Cortés than anything else in the world, and would not exchange her place to be Cacica of all the provinces in New Spain. (51)

With these words Malitzín Tenepal presumably forgave her mother and brother, and publicly renounced her royal inheritance. We can argue that Díaz Bernal heavily mediated or even distorted Malitzin Tenepal’s words, and because of this, it is difficult to

⁴⁴ *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*.

⁴⁵ This is why in 1987 Gloria Anzaldúa would write “The worst kind of betrayal lies in making us believe that the Indian woman in us is the betrayer” (44).

discern Malitzin's own reasoning for aiding Cortés. For this Spanish *conquistador*, Malitzin was a willing convert and thus aid to conquest. For Mexicans like Octavio Paz, she stood as the traitor to her nation. In contrast, Chicana scholar Del Castillo proposed that

Doña Marina should not be portrayed as negative, insignificant or foolish, but instead be perceived as a woman who was able to act beyond her prescribed societal function, namely, that of being a mere concubine and servant, and perform as one who was willing to make great sacrifices for what she believed to be a philanthropic conviction. (123)

Del Castillo attributed to Malitzin Tenepal/Doña Marina the conscious awareness that her child was to form part of a new people: the mestizo. Furthermore, Del Castillo also confronted the Mexican nationalist idea that Malitzin was a traitor to her nation, pointing out that “we cannot accuse Doña Marina of having betrayed the Indian peoples as a whole for it was they who had decided it would be to their advantage to help free themselves from the yoke of Aztec dominance” (125). For Del Castillo, Malitzin Tenepal was an ally of other indigenous people fighting against Aztec imperialism. Thus, Malitzin Tenepal is not a traitor to indigenous people as a whole, but “Mexico's first and most exceptional heroine” (Del Castillo 125-126).

Historical and anthropological texts, both by Chicanos and non-Chicanos, have repeatedly throughout the decades emphasized the dominant narrative that Chicanos are the mestizo offspring of indigenous women and Spanish conquistadors. For example, in Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera's⁴⁶ *The Chicanos: A History of Mexican Americans* (1972) mestizaje was used as a grand narrative to frame the course of national history:

Spaniards of widely diverse peninsular backgrounds combined with Indians of varying cultures to produce a new culture. This fusion of Indian and Spanish blood produced a new man, the mestizo. In Mexico today, the most important aspect of society is the result of this “mestizaje” process. (12)

In Meier and Rivera's text, cultural and biological mestizaje was formulated as the guiding force of historical development. The mestizo was a “new man,” the modern subject of “today.” Meier and Rivera divided their book into five historical periods: “The first period covers the development of Indian civilizations in Mexico, their defeat by Spanish conquistadores, the beginning of mestizaje, the blending of the Indian and Spanish cultures, colonization of the present-day Southwest of the United States from central Mexico [...]” (xiv). Chicano/a history is framed very similarly to the Mexican nationalist historical narrative. In this narrative, the Mexican/Chicano emerges from an indigenous past into a modern one inhabited by the “new man,” the mestizo. In this linear and singular narrative, indigenous history ends with European colonization; all subsequent historical events are coded as mestizo. Meier and Rivera's 1993-revised edition of the book, published under a different title, *Mexican Americans/American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos* (1994) further emphasizes this linear evolution by suggesting

⁴⁶ The first edition uses “Rivera,” with v, while the second edition uses “Ribera.”

that Chicanos/as descend from Spanish conquistadors, while erasing the diverse and plural genesis of Chicanos/as today.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, the uncritical presence of Vasconcelos continues to haunt more contemporary Chicano/a and Latino/a scholarship. These texts continue to uncritically reference Vasconcelos and to propose his theories of mestizaje as a solution to racial hierarchy and disharmony in the United States. This selective appropriation of Vasconcelos, and other Mexican intellectuals, has created intellectual blind spots that continue to remain a hidden text of some Chicano discourses. In the first edition of *Latino/a Thought: Culture, Politics, and Society* (2003), editor Francisco H. Vázquez includes his essay “América’s Patriots Then and Now: Anticolonial Struggles and Latino/a Political Thought.” In this essay, Vázquez misrepresents Vasconcelos’ “cosmic race” as a liberal conception of a “multicultural, multiracial society”:

Unlike the homogeneous, cultural, and racial identity that the English colonists developed through a policy of exclusion during one and a half centuries, the inhabitants of the Spanish colonies have evolved for three hundred years into a multicultural, multiracial society, a “Cosmic Race” according to the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos. (93)

These statements ignore contemporary conflicts amongst mestizos, indigenous people, and African Latinos, and cannot explain, for example, the Zapatista Mayan uprising in Mexico. In his introduction to the second edition of *Latino/a Thought: Culture, Politics, and Society* (2009),⁴⁸ Francisco H. Vázquez’s writes:

Latin America and the Caribbean have in some ways realized the U.S. American dream of a melting pot; although the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos used a different metaphor for it, he called it *La Raza Cósmica* (The Cosmic Race). This means, incidentally, that La raza is, by definition, an inclusive, not an exclusionary term. (xxiv)

Vázquez’s comparison of the U.S. melting pot to “la raza cósmica,” obscures the important differences between these two ideologies, and more importantly, how both ideologies have been informed by whiteness. Vázquez takes these ideologies as historical facts, and not as ideologically charged nationalist constructs that have been used to impose a common identity and culture upon racially and culturally diverse populations. These ideologies, both in Latin America and the United States, have been deployed to silence the voices of African and indigenous people who currently struggle against these forms of nationalism that have erased them from dominant conceptions of “nation.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Another book title that affirms this linear and developmentalist trope is James Diego Vigil’s *From Indians To Chicanos: The dynamics of Mexican American Culture*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1980.

⁴⁸ The first edition of *Latino/a Thought* was co-edited with Rodolfo D. Torres and was published in 2003.

⁴⁹ Comandanta Ramona, of the Mayan Zapatista movement, criticized Mexico’s erasure of indigenous people from the national imaginary. In her 1996 speech in El Zocalo, Mexico City’s biggest plaza, she stated “we want a Mexico that takes us into account as human beings, that respects us and recognizes our dignity” (my translation). See the online version of *La Jornada*. Web. 7 Dec. 2011. For the erasure of African

Instead, Vázquez proposes that mestizaje can be the solution for the United States' racial problems: "Mexican American culture is not only alive and well but also its notion of *mestizaje* may offer an important lesson that the entire United States needs to learn..." (166). Presumably, that lesson is about how to better incorporate and blend in Latinos into the fires of the U.S. melting pot.

Gregory Rodriguez's *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans, and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America* (2007), is another example of a U.S. Latino intellectual who proposes that the Latin American conception of mestizaje has the potential of destroying United States racial hierarchy. Rodriguez argues that Latin America's nationalist conception of mestizaje has proved better suited to incorporate different racial groups, in contrast to the U.S. "melting pot" which has only been able to 'melt' European ethnic groups. For Rodriguez mestizaje can be the antidote to U.S. racism and aversion of racial mixing. He proposes that mestizaje, as a new paradigm for nation building, "would help America deal more effectively with the nation's growing diversity" (iv). Rodriguez cheerfully presents results from a *Washington Post* 2000 national poll, which showed that 84 percent of Latinos believed it necessary to "blend into the larger society as in the idea of the melting pot" (xvi). The word "blend" is misleading, as Rodriguez himself notes, the poll also showed that nine out of ten Latinos emphasized the importance of maintaining their native culture.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Rodriguez takes these results as proof that the ideology of mestizaje is compatible with "the melting pot." He goes on to argue that given the increasing U.S. racial diversity, it is now necessary to recreate a model for national inclusion based on the Latino/a ideology of mestizaje:

Mexican Americans are forcing the United States to reinterpret the concept of the melting pot to include racial as well as ethnic mixing. Rather than abetting the segregationist ethos of a country divided into mutually exclusive groups, Mexican Americans continue to blur the lines between "us" and "them." Just as the emergence of the mestizos undermined the Spanish racial system in colonial Mexico, Mexican Americans, who have always confounded the Anglo American racial system, will ultimately destroy it, too. (xvii)

Rodriguez's representation confuses Latin American elite nationalist ideology (*mestizofilia*) with actual racial and cultural mixing. For while there is much to learn from African and indigenous peoples' willingness to form interracial unions and openness for cultural exchange, the same cannot always be said about Latin American elites, especially those who proposed mestizaje as a way to whiten and homogenize their respective national populations.

people and heritage in Mexico and Latin America, see Herman L. Bennett's *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (2010).

⁵⁰ See the original *Washington Post* column "A Journey in Stages: Assimilation's Pull Is Still Strong, but Its Pace Varies," by Amy Goldstein and Roberto Suro. Web. 9 Dec. 2011. < <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPcap/2000-01/16/078r-011600-idx.html>>.

Besides Vasconcelos' recurrent presence in Chicano/a and Latino/a texts, his presence has also been made in political advocacy organizations. For example, the National Council of La Raza⁵¹ cites Vasconcelos on their official website:

The term "La Raza"... was coined by Mexican scholar José Vasconcelos to reflect the fact that the people of Latin America are a mixture of many of the world's races, cultures, and religions. Some people have mistranslated "La Raza" to mean "The Race," implying that it is a term meant to exclude others. In fact, the full term coined by Vasconcelos, "La Raza Cósmica," meaning the "cosmic people," was developed to reflect not purity but the mixture inherent in the Hispanic people. This is an inclusive concept, meaning that Hispanics share with all other peoples of the world a common heritage and destiny.⁵²

This is another example of a misreading of Vasconcelos' work, one that contradicts Vasconcelos' own racism. The NCLR here suggests that because many Latinos/as are of mixed race background, they are more respectful of cultural and racial diversity. Although the NCLR does not make clear what they mean by "destiny," we do know that Vasconcelos hoped for the creation of a fifth and final "cosmic" race that would lead to a homogenous world, and the disappearance of indigenous and African populations. Given the history of the NCLR, it is unlikely that they will support this scenario, but because they associate their mission with Vasconcelos, they could easily be accused of racism. It is imperative that we revisit the history of the idea of *mestizaje* to examine who this ideology has excluded from national imaginaries, and how it has at times been complicit with imperial and colonizing thought. The celebration of cultural hybridity and racial mixing cannot be based on the willful erasure of the ways the ideology of *mestizaje* has worked precisely to erase cultural and racial diversity.

While it is true that some Chicano/a and Latino/a authors of the late 1960s and 1970s were not sufficiently cognizant of Mexican *mestizofilia*, it is also true that Chicanos/as like Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, Alurista, Luis Valdez, Nicandro F. Juárez, Adelaida del Castillo and Carmen Tafolla made some important breaks (disclaims) with *mestizofilia*. As my fifth and concluding chapter discusses, their work carved an initial path that would eventually lead towards more critical conceptions of *mestizaje* and indigeneity, such as that by Chicana/o intellectuals like Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Laura E. Pérez, Patrisia Gonzales, and Roberto Rodriguez. I wish to situate my own work within this intellectual trajectory.

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. This introductory chapter has began to discuss some of the ways that Mexico's dominant conception of *mestizaje* and nationalism, referred here as *mestizofilia*, has been complicit with both white supremacy and patriarchy. In their efforts to create a new sense of identity and nationalism, Chicanos/as of the late 1960s and 1970s made use of Mexico's ideology of *mestizaje* as a tool to confront the racist and exclusionary practices of their time. My short overview of Chicano/a and Latino/a literature has also problematize the presence of José

⁵¹ First founded in 1968 as the Southwest Council of La Raza.

⁵² From the National Council of La Raza's website. Web. 20 Feb. 2009.

<<http://www.nclr.org/section/about/mission>>.

Vasconcelos' *raza cósmica* in Chicano/a and Latino/a thought. I have argued that Chicano/a and U.S. Latino/a scholars need to be more careful with their usages of *mestizaje*, so as to not unwittingly associate themselves with the Eurocentrism and elitism of *mestizofilia*.

Chapter two, "Making 'Indians' and 'Mestizos' in Colonial Society," focuses on the Spanish colonial period and explores how the categories of "indio" and "mestizo" were conceptualized in relationship to whiteness and blackness. Sixteenth and seventeenth century constructions of *raza* (race) and *casta* (caste) were informed by a Renaissance logic that justified human hierarchy as the result of a divinely set natural order. Colonization was simultaneously a process of material dispossession and a process of ideologically constructing indigenous people as *colonizable subjects* (i.e. people in need of Christianization). The creation of the "indio" also meant specific fiscal, legal and labor obligations, such as the payment of tribute to the crown and unpaid forced labor for the Spanish. Thus, there were some material benefits to those indigenous people who could be classified as "mestizo," such as escape from tribute obligations and the opportunity to earn wages. However, the jump from the "indio" to the "mestizo" category was not simply a matter of self-identification, but often the result of outside categorizations on the part of colonial officials that relied on stereotypical views of how an "indio" looked and behaved like. I revisit this historical period in order to problematize the ways that these categories are taken for granted.

Chapter three, "*Mestizofilia* and *Indigenismo* During the *Porfiriato*," explores the rise of Mexico's mestizo nationalism and paternalistic state policies directed at indigenous communities during the regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911), a period commonly referred to as the *Porfiriato*. Influenced by social Darwinism, Mexican intellectuals like Vicente Riva Palacio and Andrés Molina Enríquez believed that the existence of racial and cultural diversity inhibited national consolidation and progress. These intellectuals proposed both cultural and biological *mestizaje* as a way to create a homogenous mestizo nation. This chapter discusses how the institutionalization of *mestizofilia* coincides with the rise of state-sponsored *indigenismo*, comprised of a set of paternalistic policies and attitudes developed by white and mestizo elites to, in their view, uplift indigenous people from cultural and/or biological backwardness. *Indigenismo* also involved the appropriation of the indigenous past as a common national origin. While on the one hand Porfirio Díaz invested in Mexico's archeological sites and built monuments to Aztec rulers, on the other, he waged genocidal wars and dispossessed the indigenous population.

Chapter four, "(R)Evolutionary Mexico: José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio," discusses how *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo* gained institutional strength after the 1910 Mexican Revolution. I analyze the early work of José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, two early twentieth century Mexican intellectuals who agreed that it was not possible to be both Indian and Mexican, and who proposed to solve the "Indian problem" through cultural and racial *mestizaje*. In response to the prevalent social Darwinist view that racial mixing produced a biologically degenerated race, Vasconcelos claimed that racial mixing worked as a natural filter that maintained the superior biological traits of each race while discarding the inferior ones, thus producing a superior offspring. While Vasconcelos rejected mestizo inferiority vis-à-vis Europeans, he simultaneously affirmed mestizos' racial and cultural superiority over indigenous people (as well as over Africans and

Asians). The work of anthropologist Manuel Gamio was central to the expansion of *indigenismo*, a state-sponsored project that aimed to transform indigenous people through cultural assimilation and social engineering. Gamio believed that national heterogeneity was an obstacle to national unity, and an impediment to national progress. Common to Vasconcelos' *mestizofilia* and Gamio's *indigenismo* was the Eurocentric view that indigenous people were biologically and culturally inferior to Europeans, and therefore, the state should promote and direct the transformation of Indians into mestizos through cultural and/or biological mestizaje.

Chapter five, "(An)Other Geography: Aztlán," provides a genealogy and discussion of the Chicano/a concept of Aztlán, to illustrate both the continuities and ruptures with Mexico's mestizo ideology and *indigenismo*. Although Chicanos/as of the late 1960s and early 1970s borrowed from Mexican official discourse, their formulations of mestizaje and Aztlán departed significantly from the racism of the Mexican state, especially that of Vasconcelos and Gamio who saw little value in the indigenous culture. It was these initial, and at times contradictory, ruptures with *mestizofilia* that would allow future generations of indigenous identified Chicanos/as to continue to rethink the meaning of racial mixing and their indigeneity. The concept of Aztlán, together with Gloria Anzaldúa's *borderlands*, maps a Chicano/a discursive site superimposed on both the United States and Mexican nationalist mappings. In this chapter I discuss Chicana/o configurations of Aztlán in the work of Alurista, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Roberto Rodriguez, and Patrisia Gonzales as cartographers of (an)other geography that intersects multiple planes, including land, Chicana/o bodies and bloodlines, historical memory, and myth. In the work of these indigenous-identified Xican@s, we can identify the emergence of a *transborder coalitional indigeneity*,⁵³ one that seeks to transcend geopolitical and ideological borders to meet and coalesce with other indigenous people struggling for their decolonization.

⁵³ I thank my mentor, and dissertation chair, Laura E. Pérez for this term.

CHAPTER TWO

Making “Indians” and “Mestizos” in Colonial Society

Brother Aguilar, I am married and have three children and the Indians look on me as a Cacique and captain in wartime – You go, and God be with you, but I have my face tattooed and my ears pierced what would the Spaniards say should they see me in this guise? and [sic] look how handsome these boys of mine are, for God's sake give me those green beads you have brought, and I will give the beads to them and say that my brothers have sent them from my own country.

– Gonzalo Guerrero, 1519, From Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*.

Thus was the supposed reply of the Spaniard Gonzalo Guerrero to fray Jerónimo de Aguilar when the later brought news that Hernán Cortés had paid for their ransom, after being lost in Yucatan for about eight years after a shipwreck. Gonzalo's is an intriguing story in which a Spaniard becomes assimilated to the indigenous culture, and eventually chooses to fight on the side of the Mayans against the Spanish *conquistadores*. Although Gonzalo's words come to us as hearsay, since his words were transcribed about forty years after the event by Bernal Díaz del Castillo (Braham 4), what interests me is that Gonzalo Guerrero chose to fight against the Spanish and on the side of indigenous people, proof that identity and loyalties were constantly being negotiated from the beginning of Spanish colonization. This story illustrates the malleability of identity and the possibility of loyalties not tied to race; in colonial society, a Spaniard could become “Indianized,”¹ an Indian could become Hispanized, and a mixed race mestizo could identify as indigenous, Spaniard or mestizo.

This chapter rethinks the social construction of the colonial categories “Indian” and “mestizo,” as well as how these terms were formulated within the discourse of Spanish Christianity. My point is not simply to reconsider an early history of these terms, but to show how they emerged from a web of unequal power relations that gave meaning to the words “mestizo” and “Indian.” Part of this project requires an exploration of how these terms were deployed for purposes of racialization, social differentiation, and control. While I do provide a review of literature here, and while this chapter focuses on the Spanish colonial era, my greater purpose is to intervene in contemporary Chicano/a and Latino/a conceptions of mestizaje and indigeneity, so as to problematize the way these terms are often taken for granted and without critically examining their colonial legacies. It is this concern, for an intervention on contemporary discussions on mestizaje and indigeneity, that make this chapter necessary and lays the foundations of my greater argument (one which I will develop in later chapters): our contemporary usages of mestizaje and indigeneity continue to be haunted by colonial legacies that support white supremacy and Eurocentrism. My project thus speaks directly to those who propose

¹ Conquistador and historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés would later write that Gonzalo “ya convertido en un indio, e muy peor que un indio, e casado con una India, e sacrificadas las orejas e la lengua e labrado la persona, pintado como indio, e con mujer e hijos” (qtd. in Braham 5).

cultural and/or racial *mestizaje* as the answer to social divisions and bifurcation in a multi-racial society, and who compare *mestizaje* to United States' conceptions of the melting pot or multiculturalism. The meaning of "mestizo" and "Indio" during colonization (as well as today) can be seen as discursive and ontological territories where social actors negotiated the power and privileges tied to ethnicity, race, class, and gender. Of importance are the recurring instances of subversive coalitions among the diverse ethno-racial groups, and specially for this study, among indigenous people and the mixed race populations because they mark a space of decolonial possibility in which we can situate contemporary decolonial movements.² In the first section of this chapter, I will briefly discuss the Renaissance conception of *raza*, a term that was at first meant to distinguish between Christians and non-Christians, but with Spanish colonization the concept became more closely associated with notions of inferior and superior bodies. This religious understanding will serve to distinguish between Africans and indigenous people, as well as to the place of their mixed race offspring. The second section of this chapter will discuss how the increasing numbers of mixed race people, especially mestizos, necessitated the development of a more complex system of social classification, called the *sistema de castas*. Finally, I will discuss how the practice of *passing* complicated the balance of power in colonial society.

Christianity and the Renaissance Conception of *Raza* and *Casta*

Spanish colonization of the Americas instituted a racial hierarchy premised on the supposed innate differences between the Spanish colonizers, the indigenous colonized, and enslaved Africans.³ To determine a person's social positioning, the Spanish developed an intricate system of social differentiation that took into account ancestry, physical appearance, class, gender, and other social characteristics. To better understand the process of racial formations⁴ during colonial Mexico, we need to remember that racial categories do not have finished and stable meanings; the meanings of "Spanishness," "Indianess," and "mestizoneess" were formulated from a specific historical context and within a complex web of power relations where social identity and status were constantly negotiated.

Raza and *casta* were two of the main colonial terms used to describe a person's body and presumed social worth or status. Laura A. Lewis points out that the first documented usage of *raza* dates back to 1438, and was a more neutral category used to speak about different groups of people. Throughout the Spanish Reconquista wars, *raza* would be negatively associated with Jews and Moors in the 15th century as non-Christians (L. Lewis 23). According to Magnus Mörner, "*casta* is a medieval, Iberian word that

² Examples of such coalitions include the 1692 rebellions of Mexico City, the independence struggle called for by mestizo Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, and the contemporary Mayan Zapatista movement.

³ It should be noted that sixteenth and seventeenth century formulations of race were not the same as those formulated in the eighteenth century with the European Enlightenment.

⁴ In their book, *Racial Formations in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s* (1994), Michael Omi and Howard Winant define racial formation as a "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (55).

might designate any kind of animal or human group” (53). In the Spanish colonies, the term *casta* was commonly used to refer to Indians, blacks, and people of mixed racial descent (whose identities were also constructed in opposition to Christians). The Spanish did not refer to themselves as *castas*, although they are also included in *casta* paintings series.⁵ Colonial society was legally divided into Spanish and Indians, with *castas* occupying an ambiguous space in between. Church parishes generally kept three separate baptismal books: a *libro de españoles*, a *libro de castas de mezcla* (sometimes referred to as *libro de color quebrado* or book of broken color) and a third for Indians, although at times the *castas* and Indians were kept in the same book. *Raza* and *casta* were messy concepts that do not neatly fit into our contemporary understandings of race. In *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*, Magali Carrera argues that scholars need to make a distinction between *calidad*, as social status, and *raza*, as “lineage;” so as to not muddle our understanding of colonial Mexico with our modern conception of race, a formulation that is better associated with the European Enlightenment. Carrera argues that *calidad* was a more important concept for the Spanish than *raza*, since *calidad* incorporated caste, class, and lineage. Although Carrera understands *calidad* as the pairing of race and class, this social construction takes place in a system that values Spanishness over Indianess and blackness. Rather than equating race with *casta* or *calidad*, we should look at *raza*, *casta*, and *calidad* in colonial Mexico as overlapping categories that made use of ancestry, phenotype and class to determine a person’s social positioning. I want to further argue, however, that given the centrality of the body in colonial discourse and social hierarchy, we can still use “race” as a useful category when discussing the social differentiation of colonizer and colonized. As Ilona Katzew points out, “[w]hile identification in Mexico was linked to class as much as occupation, race continued to be the dominant metaphor used to categorized people” (202).

The concept of *raza* came out of the Spanish nation-building need to unify diverse groups of Christian people against non-Christians during the Spanish *Reconquista* wars that expelled the Moors out of the Iberian peninsula after more than 700 years of colonization. The social construction of “Indian” by the Spaniards in the Americas was a process of amalgamating different peoples with a plurality of histories and identities and flattening them into a colonial identity that would facilitate their control. The term “Indian” erased cultural particularities at the same time that it constructed new identities. The term “mestizo,” from Spanish “mezcla,” derived from the Latin adjective “mixticius” meaning of mixed background (Bernand and Gruzinski 7), was a colonial category created during Spanish colonization of the Americas to refer to the offspring of Spanish and indigenous people.⁶ The mestizo was envisioned as a third racial type who did not fully belong to either group. R. Douglas Cope points out in *The Limits Of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660 – 1720*, that the term mestizo was first applied to mixed race social outcasts:

⁵ Casta paintings were paintings that depicted the different ethno-racial categories. Casta paintings will be discussed later in the chapter.

⁶ I will alternate between “Indian,” “indigenous people,” and “native” to refer to the original people of the Americas. The term “Indian” would be discussed in a later part of this chapter.

When the term “mestizo” began to appear in the late 1530s, it referred to marginal individuals—persons of Spanish-Indian descent who were not full members of either group. Juan de Zumárraga, the first archbishop of Mexico, described them as “orphaned boys, sons of Spanish men and Indian women” who wandered through the countryside, ignorant of the law and Christianity and reduced to eating “raw meat.” (15)

Zumárraga’s comments exemplify the Catholic disdain for illegitimacy and for mestizos who were disconnected from either Spanish or indigenous communities. Part of the reason for their social marginalization, is that the first mestizos were often the byproduct of war and sexual violence. A distinction was made however, between the mestizo children of indigenous nobles, who were often born in sanctioned marriages and could even inherit *encomiendas* (Mörner 28), and the marginalized mestizos who were the children of rape or born out of wedlock.⁷

Looking at the conditions of the sexualized violence of the Spanish against the indigenous populations is significant because it highlights the unequal power relations between colonizers and colonized, as well as how sex and gendered subordination was established along with racial exploitation.⁸ As Hernán Cortés marked a path of destruction to Mexico-Tenochtitlan, indigenous women were sometimes offered, possibly in marriage, to Cortés and his men as a way to forge alliances between the indigenous nations and the Spanish. Thomas Ward cites as an example Cortés’ war with the Tlaxcalans: “After three savage battles the Tlaxcalans opted for peace with the invaders. How did they plan to achieve it? Without hesitation women are offered ‘para que de su generación tengamos parientes’” (439).⁹ This offering of women in marriage was more often than not misread as cashing in on the spoils of war. The most famous example of these women is Malitzin Tenepal (a.k.a. “La Malinche”), who would be instrumental in Cortés’ triumph over the Aztecs. The use of indigenous women during colonization goes to show that women entered colonial society as both negatively racialized *and* as an oppressed sex/gender. As philosopher María Lugones observes, indigenous and black womanhood was constructed differently than white womanhood: “They were understood as animals in the deep sense of ‘without gender,’ sexually marked as female, but without the characteristics of femininity” (“Coloniality” 13).

Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the Americas in 1492, the same year that the Spanish expelled the Muslim Moors after almost eight centuries (711 – 1492) of conflict. It is this conflict between Spanish Christians, Muslim Moors and Jews that profoundly shaped “the institutions and mentality of the Spanish and Portuguese (Chasteen 31). For fifteenth century Spanish, the meaning of *raza* was tied to a religious logic and not the pseudoscientific classification that the later European Enlightenment sought to formulate in the eighteenth century; the binary was not between white and non-white bodies, but between Christians and non-Christians. The determining factor was a

⁷ I will expand on this distinction later in the chapter.

⁸ Early Chicana feminists like Martha Cotera, Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez, and Anna Nieto Gomez had already made this point in the 1970s. See a discussion of their work in Laura Pérez’s *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* (2007).

⁹ “So that from their generation we will have common relatives.”

person's *purity of blood* (*pureza de sangre* or *limpieza de sangre*), understood as coming from an old Christian lineage and excluding any Jewish or Muslim ancestry. As Magali Carrera points out, "'Raza' connoted generational association with Jews and Moors and was used in Spain as a means to legitimize the discrimination and persecution of non-Christians and their descendants" (10). When the Spanish spoke of *pureza de sangre*,¹⁰ they were not talking about genetic material, but about Christian blood as opposed to Jewish or Muslim blood. It was believed that the quality and attributes of Christianity were passed to their descendants through the parents' blood, and so, non-Christians as well as new Christian converts were to be distrusted, for their blood was impure or deficient:

Indeed, the Spanish Inquisition was established in 1478, specifically to target converted Jews (*conversos*), who were widely thought to be heretics hiding their religion under a thin veneer of Christianity. Through genealogical proof before the Inquisition, "Spaniards" distinguished themselves from such conversos, as well as from converted and equally secretive Moors (*moriscos*). As the social community (*república*) came to be defined more and more around Spanish-speaking Christians, status-seeking individuals became more obsessively concerned with their blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*), and Spanish writers began to link *raza* explicitly to genealogy and blood. (L. Lewis 23)

Renaissance formulation of race was premised on the presumed inferiority and sinful character of non-Christians, and in the Americas those seen as sinful also happened to be non-white. The conceptions of *raza* emphasized blood and the body to decode a person's 'true' nature. Although the logic behind the Renaissance conception of race was religious and not scientific, the presumed superiority of white Christians would become a constant unifying thread.

It was Christopher Columbus who first wrote (1492) that indigenous people would be "good and intelligent servants," and that they could be easily subjugated.¹¹ On his return to Europe, Columbus took a few indigenous people as slaves who were displayed at the royal court; thus Columbus set the first precedent that constructed indigenous people as colonizable subjects. Later, the 1493 papal bulls of donation (*Inter Caetera*) of Pope Alexander VI, granted to the kings of Castile the right to colonize the Americas and their people. The Spanish were to conquer these new lands and have "the barbarous nations subdued and brought to the faith."¹² Then in 1513, *El Requerimiento* (the Requirement), was prepared by the royal lawyer Juan López Palacios Rubios, to be read to the natives before "just war" could be made against them. According to the Requirement, the Spanish had the right to make war on indigenous people who refused Spanish rule and Christianity:

¹⁰ Purity of blood. It was also referred to as *limpieza de sangre*, or cleanliness of blood.

¹¹ From *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America 1492 – 1493*, p. 69. "Thursday 11 October."

¹² For the full text, see *People And Issues in Latin American History: The Colonial Experience* (2006), edited by Lewis Hanke and Jane M. Rausch.

We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do all the harm and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord, and resist and contradict him; and we protest that the deaths and losses which shall accrue from this are your fault, and not that of their Highnesses, or our, nor these gentlemen who come with us. (qtd. in Hanke 36)

The papal bull of 1493 and the Requirement of 1513 officially constructed indigenous people as colonizable subjects and their colonization justified because they were not Christians, and not necessarily because they were not European. This does not mean that the Spanish saw indigenous people as biological equals; there were many Spaniards who questioned the humanity of indigenous people. Among the most virulent advocates of the theory of indigenous inferiority was the conquistador and historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, who in 1535 wrote *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. He argued that the bodies of indigenous people were different to those of the Spanish, for example Oviedo claims that their skulls were much thicker:

I also happen to think of something that I have observed many times with regard to these Indians. Their skulls are four times thicker than those of the Christians. And so when one wages war with them and comes hand to hand fighting, one must be very careful not to hit them on the head with the sword, because I have seen many swords broken in this fashion. In addition to being thick, their skulls are very strong. (qtd. in Hanke 41-42)

Oviedo would serve as a main reference to theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda who justified war against Indians and even their enslavement. As the words of Oviedo illustrate, although the Renaissance conception of *raza* was at first based on a division between Christians and non-Christians, this began to change with the Spanish colonization of the Americas.

The Spanish ardently debated the legal social position of indigenous people in respect to Europeans. Within the church, the well known 1550 Valladolid debate between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Fray Bartolomé De las Casas laid out two opposing European views as to the nature of indigenous peoples, and the proper way of colonizing and Christianizing them.¹³ Juan Gínes de Sepúlveda, like many others of his time, believed that the Indians were intellectually like children, a people without reason (*gente sin razón*). Bartolomé de Las Casas had gone from slave owner and *encomendero* to an ardent defender of indigenous people; he now defended their moral virtues and intellectual capacity. According to Lewis Hanke, there existed two polarities among the Spanish conquistadors in regard to their views of indigenous people: the “noble savage” view that constructed indigenous people as virtuous and closer to God, and the “dirty

¹³ Notice that the argument was not about whether indigenous people should be Christianized or not, but on the correct way to do so. Even though las Casas was seen as progressive, and some people found his assertions radical, he was still limited by the logic of his time and his conviction of the superiority of Christianity.

dog” view that constructed them as inferior and violent (9). *Encomenderos*¹⁴ and some clergy did not hesitate in comparing Indians to “beasts,” dogs and other animals. In 1519, the Franciscan Bishop Juan de Quevedo called Indians “siervos a natura,” or natural slaves, a direct reference to Aristotle (Hanke 11).¹⁵

Sepúlveda would later use Aristotle to write a treaty to argue the inferiority of the Indian and in favor of their enslavement. As Laura A. Lewis points out in her book, *Halls of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico*:

The treatise blended Christian and Aristotelian notions of humanity, the doctrine of natural law, and the divine origins of Spanish social norms to prove the inferiority of the Indians, their unwillingness to accept Christianity, and the right of Spaniards to rule them by force. In Sepúlveda’s view, Indians were “barbarians,” or Aristotle’s natural slaves. (Lewis 58)

The Christian belief in a “natural order” led the Spanish to believe that they occupied a higher divine status than non-Christians; however, even when indigenous people became Christians, because of their presumed inferiority or because of their recent conversion, they were still required to serve. In addition, Sepúlveda called indigenous people “gente inhumana,” that is, inhuman people. Sepúlveda also made use of the sexism of the time to compare Indians to women:

In prudence, talent, virtue, and humanity [Indians] are as inferior to Spaniards as children to adults, women to men, as the wild and cruel to the most meek, as the prodigiously intemperate to the continent and temperate, that I have almost said, as monkeys to men. (qtd. in Hanke 84)

The difference between Spaniards and Indians was constructed through dualistic thinking that placed the Indian in oppositional relation to the Spanish. Where the Spanish stood for reason, the indigenous for *unreason*, and as the quote above argues, “almost” at the level of monkeys. Spanish women, like Indians, had few rights under colonial law. Both were perceived as intellectually inferior and incapable of self-government. Whereas Sepúlveda championed the *encomendero* cause and argued for greater access to free indigenous labor, De las Casas argued that the indigenous body was by nature frail, and as recent Christian converts they deserved the Crown’s protection (Swarthout 33). De las Casas was successful in formalizing limited colonial rights for indigenous people, and the Crown instituted legal segregation into two separate “republics” as a way to protect natives from Spanish brutality (this might have lead to costly rebellions and loss of tributes).

Although the Spanish saw both Indians and Africans as intellectually and physically inferior, they did make a distinction between African and Indian “blood.” For Spaniards, the dark skin of blacks was associated with the biblical story of Noah’s curse of Ham, who had dared to expose Noah’s nakedness as he slept. Katzew elaborates this point:

¹⁴ Encomenderos were those Spaniards who had received land and indigenous labor as a reward for participating in the conquest.

¹⁵ “But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female.” From Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book I, ch ii, 125b1–7.

Being black not only presupposed a possible Muslim background but also pointed to slavery and atavistic ancestry. In fact, blacks were long thought to be a damned people directly descended from Ham, Noah's youngest son. Genesis 9 and 10 relates that Ham committed a hubristic act when he exposed his father's nakedness to his brothers Shem and Japhet while Noah lay asleep drunk. Upon waking and realizing what Ham had done, Noah cursed him, condemning Ham's son Canaan to perpetual servitude. (Katzew 46)

This biblical passage, along with Aristotle's view of "natural slaves," was taken to explain black skin and slavery as the result of Noah's curse. Blackness was the mark of sin, thus white Christians were ostensibly justified in their enslavement of blacks.

While the Spanish would eventually encourage indigenous people to mix with Spanish, the Spanish colonizers sought to prevent mixing with blacks. In his book *Idea compendiosa del Reyno de Nueva España*, written in 1774, merchant and writer Pedro Alonso O'Crouley exemplified a common attitude when he wrote the following about mixing with blacks:

To those contaminated with the Negro strain we may give, over all, the name mulatos, without specifying the degree or the distance direct or indirect from the Negro root or stock, since, as we have clearly seen, it colors with such efficacy ...[that] even the most effective chemistry cannot purify. (qtd. in Carrera 13)

The view that black blood could not be purified seems to have already been influenced by the Enlightenment (as evident by its usage of scientific discourse, i.e. chemistry), but it also mirrors earlier religious conceptions that also did not allow for the total whitening of blacks. Indians did not carry this burden however, and for Spanish like Dominican historian Diego Durán, Indians were a lost tribe of Israel and could be redeemed. In his *Historia de las indias de nueva España* (1587), he states:

Para tratar de la cierta y verdadera relacion del origen y principio de estas naciones indianas ... será necesario llegarnos á las sospechas y conjeturas, á la demasiada ocasion que esta gente nos da con su bajísimo modo y manera de tratar, y de su conversacion tan baja, tan propia á la de los judíos, que podriamos ultimadamente afirmar ser naturalmente judíos y gente hebrea, y creo no incurriria en capital error el que lo afirmase, si considerando su modo de vivir, sus ceremonias, sus ritos y supersticiones, sus agüeros y hipocresías, tan emparentadas y propias de las de los judíos, que en ninguna cosa difieren; para probacion de lo qual será testigo la Sagrada Escripura, donde clara y abiertamente sacaremos ser verdadera esta opinion, y algunas razones bastantes que para ello daremos [sic].¹⁶ (Durán 1)

¹⁶ "To consider the certain and truthful origin and beginning of these Indian nations [...] it will be necessary to rely on suspicions and conjectures, on the many occasions that these people give us with their lowly way of being and way of interacting, and their very low conversation, so proper of the Jews, that we can ultimately affirm that they are naturally Jewish and Hebrew people, and I believe whoever affirms this will not incur in grave error, if one considers their way of living, their ceremonies, their rites and

Durán follows this assertion with a list of comparisons between Jewish and indigenous people. It is clear that he held both groups in low esteem, however, this helps us explain why the Spanish saw indigenous people differently than they did Africans.

According to the *casta system* Indian blood could be purified through three generations of continual mixing with the Spanish. This logic goes as follows: a Spanish and an Indian would have a *mestizo* child, then that *mestizo* would mix with a Spanish and produce a *castizo* child, this *castizo* would then mix with a Spaniard and produce another Spaniard (Carrera 12). This was not possible for the offspring of Spaniards and Africans, who could not be whitened or *purified* of their original sin. As Lewis points out:

... the word *mestizo*, derived from the Spanish word *mezcla* (mixture), implied that although they were clearly separate, Indians and Spaniards were nevertheless blendable and might successfully mate to create new persons. In contrast, *mulato*, which derives from the word *mulo* (mule), a sterile cross between a donkey and a horse, advances the notion that blacks were of a different kind insofar as the offspring they had with Spanish or Indians were seen to reproduce nothing replicable; that is, no lineage. (Lewis 30)

African and Indian offspring were called Zambo or zambaigo, meaning ‘knock-kneed.’ Other zoologically inspired terms such as lobo (wolf) or coyote appeared during the seventeenth century (Katzew 44). It should also be noted that blacks and their descendants were not always slaves, since children were granted the status of their mothers, this meant that black men who had children with free women of whatever *casta* would be free (Menchaca, *Recovering History* 61).

As has long been noted by other scholars, there were no “Indians” in what would be called the Americas before European colonization, but a rich diversity of peoples, histories and cultures. The category “Indian” was a colonial social construction that assigned status and was tied to law and to labor obligations. In his book, *Race, Caste, And Status: Indians in Colonial Spanish America*, Robert H. Jackson illustrates the creation of the “indio” through residential segregation, law, labor obligations, and other means of social control:

The Spanish attempted to reinforce a special legal and fiscal status for the indigenous populations by collapsing an ethnically and culturally diverse population into a single caste status. ... indios constituted a separate corporate group legally known as the *república de indios*. Indios had specific obligations to the Crown which included payment of tribute and provision of labor through *corvées*, such as the Andean *mita* and the central Mexican *repartimiento*. (Jackson 118 – 9)

The Spanish thus interwove the racialized subordination of “Indians” with practices of labor exploitation. The initial Spanish labor system, known as *encomienda*, treated

superstitions, their omens and hypocrisies, so related and proper to the Jews, that in no way do they differ; the proof of which is the Sacred Scriptures, where clearly and openly we will prove that this opinion is true, and some many reasons for this we will give” (my translation).

indigenous people as disposable labor, with the *encomenderos*, Spanish who were granted ownership of the work and tribute of Indians, as the most brutal overseers. Mining in particular was often a death sentence, and was often assigned to punish rebellious indigenous people. The *encomienda* system was created as a reward to Spanish conquistadors; the *encomienda* or stewardship meant that the Spanish *encomendero* was ostensibly entrusted with the proper conversion of Indians to Christianity as well as with the exploitation of their labor. The Crown also conscripted indigenous labor, through *repartimiento*, for public and other work deemed necessary for the crown, such as mining. Colonial society came to be somewhat segregated between the *república de españoles* and the *república de indios* (Spanish Republic and Indian Republic); each with its own rights, obligations, and internal social hierarchy of nobles and plebeians.¹⁷ In his analysis of Nahuatl written texts authored by indigenous people, James Lockhart successfully shows that they rarely referred to themselves as “Indians”: “Spanish documents, and even Spanish translations of Nahuatl documents, make repeated use of the term Indian (*indio*), but rarely do we find it in Nahuatl documents, not even in the very ones whose translations use the word” (8). This would mean that while the Spanish created the “Indian” category as given, it took much longer for indigenous people to internalize the colonizer’s discourse.

Although the castas were prohibited by law from living within Indian communities, however, this did not mean that they were full citizens of the *república de españoles*. Many mestizo children, however, were allowed to live with their Indian mothers, and were assigned the same obligations as the rest of the community; to be racially mixed then did not necessarily mean not being an Indian. The *casta* system was supposed to mirror Spanish belief in a natural human hierarchy, with each type of people occupying a divinely set place. But the creation of the *casta* system also had more mundane applications, such as the exploitation of indigenous and black labor. The colonial labor market was highly segmented, with laws that either allowed or denied the different castas access to certain professions: “... Spaniards and castas were viewed as having specific economic associations: the Spaniards were landholders and merchants; Indians, unskilled workers; and Black Africans, slaves and servants” (Carrera 41). To serve at the government level, a candidate had to demonstrate their *purity of blood*:

Not only royal councilors but also judges in *audiencias* and chancelliers, secretaries, *alcaldes*, *alguaciles*, *mayordomos*, and other imperial officers had to demonstrate *limpieza*. Even local officers such as *corregidores*, *regidores*, and *alcaldes* had to meet such requirements, which now affected every public office throughout the realm. (Twinam 46)

To exclude the indigenous from certain professions, the Spanish created artisan guilds that excluded the castas, such as those dealing with metals and leatherwork. As Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano points out, this was a “racist distribution of labor” that segmented Indians and blacks into manual labor:

This was, above all, through a quasi-exclusive association of whiteness with wages and, of course, with the high-order positions in the colonial

¹⁷ These social boundaries were porous, however, and as James Lockhart has showed, small communities of Spaniards sometimes did develop within indigenous communities (Lockhart 4).

administration. Thus each form of labor control was associated with a particular race. Consequently, the control of a specific form of labor could be, at the same time, the control of a specific group of dominated people. (537)

During the sixteenth century, the Indians were used by the Spanish to extract gold, produce food, and perform most manual labor. Although legal indigenous slavery was abolished in the mid-sixteenth century, native people could still be forced to work through labor drafts, called *repartimiento*, vagrancy laws, or because of accumulated debt. Anti-vagrancy laws meant that the Spanish could force any of the castas to work if they were deemed vagabonds, or *vagamundos*. The association of wages with whiteness and forced labor with Indianess and blackness was made to appear natural through the Renaissance discourse of *casta* and *raza*; in other words, the colonial logic claimed that it was because they were Indians or blacks that they did not have to be paid wages.¹⁸

Capitalism and the classification of the world's peoples into categories of race developed mutually during colonialism. Racism and capitalism became deeply intertwined without necessarily ending previous modes of production: "It included traditional forms of production, property ownership, and labor organization (such as state work drafts, tribute, slavery, and the domestic confinement of women) derived from both European and indigenous systems" (Lewis 16).¹⁹ Traditional indigenous labor forms coexisted with European feudalism and slavery, all in the service of the development of what would become a world capitalist system of which Europe became the center. The social construction of race and gender, and this must be emphasized, went hand in hand with the distribution and exploitation of labor. It was not until the eighteenth century, which ended the *encomienda* system and brought some rights and protections for non-Spanish subjects of the Crown, that the pattern of labor segmentation began to change: "Castas were more likely to work in production or service areas. Mestizos generally worked as artisans and were more likely to be laborers and servants than were criollos or castizos. Free mulattos functioned as artisans and servants" (Carrera 41). According to

¹⁸ In a different historical context, W. E. B. Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction in America* made the observation that white workers received "wages of whiteness," a psychological compensation that made them feel superior to black workers, and thus, prevented class solidarity. See W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (1965), 700.

¹⁹ Anibal Quijano also makes this point, "Slavery, in America, was deliberately established and organized as a commodity in order to produce goods for the world market and to serve the purposes and needs of capitalism. Likewise, the serfdom imposed on Indians, including the redefinition of the institutions of reciprocity, was organized in order to serve the same ends: to produce merchandise for the global market. Independent commodity production was established and expanded for the same purposes. This means that all the forms of labor and control of labor were not only simultaneously performed in America, but they were also articulated around the axis of capital and the global market. Consequently, all of these forms of labor were part of a new model of organization and labor control. Together these forms of labor configured a new economic system: capitalism" (550).

Carrera, these shifts of the labor force reflected the social pressure created by the increasing number of the mixed-race and their ascending social status.

At times the interests of the Spanish settlers, the Catholic Church, and the Crown came into conflict. While the conquistadors and Spanish settlers wanted to extract as much work and tribute from the natives, the Church wanted to make Christians out of them which required stable communities. The Crown, in the interest of law and order, had to play a balancing role and ensure the survival of some Indians:

The crown had an interest in upholding the moral authority of the church and defending Indians from the excesses of settlers. It also had to pacify those settlers, however, and both the crown and the church wanted to reserve Indian labor for themselves. Indians therefore had to be protected, but they also had to be made to work. (Lewis 17)

In 1542 the Crown first officially abolished the *encomienda* system, this was in part to limit the power and wealth of *encomenderos*, and to prevent the extinction of the Indians. The Crown stipulated that the privilege would end upon the death of the *encomendero*. When the *encomenderos* mounted heavy protest, and found supporters like Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, the crown had to keep extending their privileges. When the *encomienda* system came to an end in the eighteenth century wealthy landowners had found other ways to coerce indigenous people to work, such as the peon bondage system.²⁰

The racialized labor division of colonial society was soon to be complicated by an increasing number of mixed-race individuals, or *castas*. Spanish society developed a complex system of ethno-racial classification, a *sistema de castas*, that presumed to track the amount of whiteness, Indianness and blackness of each mixed offspring. In contrast to the New England colonies, which racialized individuals under the “one drop” rule,²¹ in the Spanish colonies the offspring of two distinct racial groups created a third ethno-racial category, called *castas*. The social status of each *casta* was ideologically placed in an evolutionary trajectory, with whites occupying the highest and most advanced position, and indigenous peoples and Africans at the bottom.

Racial Mixing and the *Sistema de castas*

As Africans, Spanish and Indians continued to mix and reproduce, the racial system became more and more complex and had to expand to make room for the different ethno-racial categories. The *sistema de castas* (casta system) developed out of the hierarchical classification of Spanish, Indians and African blacks. Depending on who

²⁰ Peón means laborer, by “peon bondage system” I am referring to the legal and common practice of forcing laborers to stay and work for a landowner (*hacendado*) by means of debt. “The peon found himself in a state of perpetual debt, and by law he was bound to remain on the hacienda so long as he owed a single centavo. Debts could be passed on to the children” (Meyer et al. 343).

²¹ In the Southern part of the United States, prior to the Civil War, the “one drop” rule stipulated that if an individual had a fraction of African ancestry that individual would be classified as mulatto or Negro, regardless of how distant the ancestor was, and regardless of appearance. For a discussion of African American racial classification and the “one drop” rule, see Evelyn Nakano Glenn’s *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (2002).

was doing the classification, there were between fourteen and twenty different categories. Carrera gives the following taxonomy:

1. *Español* and *india* beget *mestizo*
2. *Mestizo* and *española* beget *castizo*
3. *Castizo* and *española* beget *español*
4. *Española* and *negro* beget *mulato*
5. *Española* and *mulato* beget *morisco*
6. *Morisca* and *español* beget *albino*
7. *Español* and *albina* beget *torna-atrás*
8. *Indio* and *torna-atrás* woman beget *lobo*
9. *Lobo* and *india* beget *zambaigo*
10. *Zambaigo* and *india* beget *cambujo*
11. *Cambujo* and *mulata* beget *albarasado*
12. *Albarasado* and *mulata* beget *barcino*
13. *Barcino* and *mulata* beget *coyote*
14. *Coyote* woman and *indio* beget *chamiso*
15. *Chamisa* and *mestizo* beget *coyote mestizo*
16. *Coyote mestizo* and *mulata* beget *ahí te estás* (36)²²

Except for the offspring of the *castizo* and the Spanish, who theoretically had a Spanish child, all others only created additional categories. The body had to be constantly scanned, for in addition to phenotype, people could be distinguished by their type of dress, hair style, jewelry, occupation, and place of residence, all of which were regulated by law. The *sistema de castas* was then an attempt to read the body at the same time that it constructed it through new ethno-racial categories. The whole colonial enterprise depended on a racial hierarchy that not only distinguished between colonizer and colonized, but also kept the different castas divided, and at times, pitted their interests against one another. Iлона Katzew notes:

The general idea underlying the *sistema de castas* as expressed by [Spanish Jesuit missionary José Gumilla (?1687–1750)] was three fold: first, to guarantee that each race occupy a social niche assigned by nature; second, to offer the possibility of improving one's blood through the right pattern of mixing; third, to inhibit the mixture of Indians and blacks, which was deemed the more dangerous to the Spanish social order. In view of this, the *sistema de castas* functioned as a divide-and-conquer method through which the Spaniards and creoles attempted to control the colony's reproduction. (51)

Spanish hegemony thus deployed religious reason to claim that Africans, Indians and Spanish each were born into a divinely set place in a hierarchical natural order. Although

²² Carrera bases her list on Mörner (58). Mörner provides another taxonomy, where he lists the mix between an indigenous woman and an African man: “Negro and Indian woman beget sambo de Indio,” and “Negro and mulatto woman beget zambo” (59).

individuals were confined to their social positioning,²³ their children could ascend the naturalized social order if they could mix with whites or higher status castas. The casta system constructed the meaning of Spanishness in oppositional relation to non-Spanish:

Colonialism in New Spain, then, was not just a matter of historically identified colonizers and colonized, Spaniards and castas. Instead, of greater importance is the fact that the epistemological identity of Spaniards, whether *peninsulares*—European-born Spaniards—or criollos, was interlocked with the created, imagined identity of non-Spaniards (Indians, Black Africans, or castas) and their traits and characteristics. (Carrera 16)

The *sistema de castas* naturalized, that is, dehistoricized social inequality by blaming the castas themselves for their lower social condition, obscuring the workings of power and the historical events that led to a socially stratified society. To rebel against the colonial order was constructed as going against the natural order set by God; rebellion was equated with sin. Furthermore, the system was set up to prevent blacks, Indians and the different castas from forging a united front against Spanish colonialism. For example, in theory Africans were at the lowest levels of the racial society, but the “Spaniards often preferred Africans to Indians and employed them to oversee Indian labor. By their association with whites, many Africans came to occupy a position superior to that of Indians” (Katzew 39). Whites would also use blacks to punish Indians, thus diverting resentment towards blacks.

The casta system also sought to regulate the sexuality and reproduction of women. White women, because of their limited number and because they were viewed as guardians of whiteness, were especially targets of social control. A decree, the *Royal Pragmatic* of 1778²⁴ sought to give more power to parents over their children’s marriage partners, especially to limit marriages between noble Spanish and blacks, and those whose race was seen as a “defect.” It was later clarified that indigenous background should not be considered as a defect, since some families also sought to prevent their daughters from marrying Indians (Katzew 53). Intermarriage with Indians was seen as a necessary mean of Christianization, the reason which presumably justified colonization.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century a series of paintings emerged which meant to catalog the different castas of New Spain. Casta paintings usually depict a man and a woman of different races/castas and their mixed offspring; each character is labeled according to their caste. Magali Carrera situates these paintings within a network of social control and racialization, pointing out that the “visual strategy of surveillance is not just about looking; it is about constructing the very object of its observation, hybrid bodies” (53). Ilona Katzew also points out casta paintings emerged out of a desire for social control at a time when colonial authorities and elites were losing control of the boundaries between the different castas:

²³ With the exception of those few who could afford and were considered worthy of the *cedula de gracias al sacar*, which was a titled obtained by means of a fee paid to the king. This point will be developed later in the chapter.

²⁴ First issued in Spain in 1776, and later extended to include New Spain in 1778. See Twinam 309; and Carrera 118.

It is no coincidence that casta paintings were created only a few years after the famous riot of 1692 in Mexico City. The use of the image of the family to describe colonial society implied permanent inequality and bondage. In other words, the tie of “love” served to naturalize the actual power relationship among conjugal partners, and to present an image of colonial harmony. Colonial love also promised to “improve” the races. (202)

The riot/rebellion of 1692 was, in part, a response to food shortages and to government abuses (Cope; Silva Prada). The riot/rebellion was composed of indigenous people, mulattos, and poor Spaniards; perhaps suggesting that racial divisions did not completely divide the lower classes (Cope). The Spanish authorities witnessed the fragility of the colonial order, as well as realized the potential of cross-racial alliances and rebellion. Therefore, the casta paintings show, as Cope points out, “the kind of society that elite Spaniards had always longed for: hierarchical, orderly, and controlled, a society in which racial difference marked and determined status” (161). Depictions of nuclear interracial families represent the desire for social order at a time of perceived social disorder. Casta paintings simultaneously affirm racial, gender and class hierarchies by naturalizing them through familial images and love. Representations of non-Spanish women married to Spanish men may have also suggested that it was “natural” to love one’s “superior.” Casta paintings were part of a larger discourse that attempted to maintain racial borders at a time when these borders were consistently being broken down or undermined by racial mixing and individuals who passed as other castas:

But these images, and casta paintings in particular, may not be about social reality as much as they are about social engineering that was being carefully put into place by Bourbon reformers as they attempted to construct, control, and maintain colonial bodies and the spaces they occupied. (Carrera 43)

The paintings were an attempt by criollos to depict a stable and civilized society for European audiences, as well as the Bourbon concern with law and order reforms.²⁵

The casta paintings show that by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the image of the mestizo had been somewhat rehabilitated. Mestizos were no longer constructed as illegitimate outcasts, but as contributing members of society. The paintings depicted harmonious family settings of Spanish fathers, Indian mothers, and mestizo children. Representations of “love” and “family” in casta paintings further naturalized racial and gender oppression:

The development of the family trope created a sense of unity within hierarchy and promoted an image of domesticity that masked racial tension. At the same time, the image of the family served to naturalize the social hierarchy portrayed in casta painting. Since the subordination of woman to man and child to woman were considered natural facts, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. (Katzew 93)

Casta paintings, through the trope of marriage and family, were thus ideological tools that represented the subservience of women to men, and of wife to husband, as natural. The

²⁵ The Spanish Bourbon dynasty began in Spain after the death of Charles II in 1700, with the rule of Philip (1701 – 46). See Meyer, Sherman, Deeds 193.

representation of marriages between higher status male castas with lower status female castas worked to represent these power relations as natural, that is, as divinely sanctioned. Susan Kellog's study of casta paintings corroborates with Katzew's assessment, pointing out that the paintings often linked race to gender in ways that made the pairing acceptable to Spanish society by emphasizing the racial and gendered subordination of casta and indigenous women:

By portraying higher-status males with lower-status women, the repetitious image of hypergamy aligned ethnoracial and gender categories by associating higher ethnoracial status with male gender and lower ethnoracial status with female gender. This association naturalized each identity category (i.e. ethnorace and gender), attributing power to men and inferiority to women and reinforcing idealized familial and societal themes. (Kellog 76)

The process of racialization was thus also simultaneously a process of assigning gender roles *and* enforcing heteronormativity upon indigenous and mixed-race women and men. Although not all casta paintings depicted a higher status male with a lower status female, such as "De mulato y española sale morisco," these images taught viewers about the right and wrong kind of crossings, wherein a marriage the lower castas should be the women and higher men so as to not inverse the natural hierarchy between men and women, and between whites (or whiter) and the castas (or darker). There are a good number of casta paintings depicting violent scenes, these usually involved blacks or a casta deriving from mixing with blacks.²⁶ Some casta painting representations of lighter skin casta woman with a lower status male or African show that such a mix was detrimental: "The message is clear: certain mixtures – particularly those of Spaniards or Indians with blacks – can only lead to debased sentiments, immoral proclivities, and extreme susceptibility to an uncivilized state" (Katzew 114). The implication of these paintings is that white or Indian blood becomes polluted with that original sin of blacks.

Mestizos/as within the colonial casta system

During the first decades of Spanish colonization, the Crown encouraged intermarriage with the indigenous nobility as a way to access existing wealth and facilitate the transfer of political power. The Crown hoped that the offspring of these political marriages would serve as intermediaries between these two populations. The Catholic Church encouraged marriages of Spanish men who had fathered children with indigenous women, and were already living together. This was, in part, a response to the moral preoccupation with illegitimate mestizo children, and also to facilitate the conversion of indigenous women. Many Spanish did not seem to be against the idea of marrying indigenous women. In a 1571 letter by a Spanish merchant to his nephew, he wrote: "Y aunque allá os parezerá cosa reçaia en haberme casado con hindia, acá no se pierde honrra ninguna, porque es una nación la de los hindios tenida en mucho" (quoted

²⁶ See for example representations such as "De Chamizo é India sale Cambuja," "De Negro y De India Sale Lovo," and "De Español y Negra Nace Mulata." For an in-depth discussion of these and other casta paintings see Carrera (2003) and Katzew (2004).

via Bernand and Gruzinski 138).²⁷ Mörner notes that only “two kinds of intermarriages seem to have been actively promoted by the Crown,” the first was between Spaniards and daughters of indigenous nobles, since it was hoped that their children would inherit the wealth and title of the indigenous family. The other indirect pressure to marry came in 1539, when encomenderos “were ordered to marry within three years... under penalty of losing their encomiendas. This measure seems to have led to occasional formalizations of unions with Indian women” (Mörner 37).

According to R. Douglas Cope, in the seventeenth century, mestizo descendants of Indian nobles and Spanish Conquistadors occupied positions of power: “They acted as interpreters and as stewards of haciendas; they obtained positions as Indian *gobernadores* (governors) and manipulated indigenous affairs to suit their Spanish patrons” (20). The term “mestizo,” Laura A. Lewis points out, was often used by indigenous people to refer to those who did not look after indigenous interests, not necessarily to the mixed race living within indigenous communities. Poor mestizos who lived in indigenous communities could be classified, and saw themselves, as full members of their respective communities.²⁸ As Swarthout points out: “What separated *Euromestizos* from *Indomestizos* or *Afromestizos* was not blood but, rather, culture. Those *Mestizos* who adopted European dress, language, and customs enjoyed greater social status and freedom from tribute requirements. Those who did not were relegated to the lowest social status of *indios*” (40). Thus we can identify three different classes or types of “mestizos.” The first type would be the ones coming from the indigenous nobility and Spanish conquistadors; these could be distinguished by the title of “Don” or “Doña,” and might attach themselves to both Spanish society and indigenous nobility. The second group would be those who remained attached to indigenous communities and were, for all purposes, seen and saw themselves as indigenous. The third, and final group, would be those mestizos who were not members of either the Spanish or indigenous communities. This last group was the most socially ostracized because of the stigma of illegitimacy and would eventually become the bulk of the population.

Mestizo nobles enjoyed great wealth and political power, and were often exempted from regulations targeting other mestizos; for example, they were allowed to inherit *encomiendas* and keep indigenous servants. Even the Spanish names of this first group differed from other mestizos, as Bernand and Gruzinski point out:

Todos los indios, nobles o plebeyos, debían anteponer nombres cristianos, o bien patronímicos castellanos, a sus nombres indígenas; proliferaron los Juan, Pedro, Ana y María, mientras que la nobleza se reservaba nombres más brillantes: Hernán Cortés, Pedro de Alvarado, Martín de Valencia. El apellido y el nombre de pila ibéricos que recibían los miembros de la nobleza, así como el “don” español que precedía a todo el conjunto,

²⁷ “And even though it might seem a distasteful thing that I have married an Indian, here one does not lose any honor, because the Indians are a people held in high esteem” (my translation).

²⁸ This point will be discussed later in this chapter.

señalaba los nexos con los conquistadores al mismo tiempo que mostraba su condición privilegiada.²⁹ (111)

These mestizos were granted *honor* and seen as of high *calidad* because they came from Indian “nobility” and Spanish conquistadors. The Spanish, often non-noble soldiers, who married these Indian women were in fact marrying up. The viceroy Martín Enríquez once commented: “Al fin son hijos de españoles y todos se crían con sus padres que como pasen de cuatro o cinco años salen del poder de las indias y siempre han de seguir el bando de los españoles, como la parte que ellos más honran” (qtd. in Bernand and Gruzinski 114).³⁰ Of important notice here are the distinctions between the plebeian mestizos that follow their indigenous mother, and so adopted an indigenous identity, in contrast to noble mestizos that identify with the father.

Mestizos of noble descent used both of their ancestries to their benefit. A case in point would be two of the many illegitimate children of Hernán Cortés, one with the daughter of Moctezuma, Doña Isabel Tecuichpotzin, and the other child with Doña Marina, (a.k.a *La Malinche* and Malinalli Tenepatl). Cortés had a daughter with Doña Isabel Tecuichpotzin, by the name of Leonor, who would later marry with Juan de Tolosa. Tolosa was a conquistador of Zacatecas, and one of the first to acquire silver mines. Leonor and Tolosa had two daughters, one of them, doña Isabel Tolosa Cortés Moctezuma, married Juan de Oñate who eventually helped conquer and became governor of New Mexico. Cortés also had an illegitimate son with Doña Marina/Malinalli Tenepatl named Martín Cortés, who enjoyed great privilege and wealth. Martín Cortés was eventually granted legitimacy by the Pope, and knighted to the order of Santiago. Martín would later marry a Spanish woman, and would eventually die in Spain fighting against the Moors (Bernand and Gruzinski 143).

A second group of mestizos were culturally identical to the indigenous communities in which they lived: “En la segunda mitad del siglo XVI los poblados indígenas del centro de México recibían, pues, a mestizos en vías de indianización; los niños hablaban la lengua de su madre, comían y vestían como los naturales que los rodeaban y, como ellos, pagaban el tributo y heredaban los bienes de sus padres” (Bernand and Gruzinski 240).³¹ This second group was also often exempted from the power of the Inquisition, and could avoid punishment for following ‘pagan’ practices.

²⁹ “All the Indians, nobles or plebeian, had to prefix Christian names, or Castilian patronymics, to their indigenous names; proliferated the [names like] Juan, Pedro, Anay and María, while the nobility reserved for themselves more brilliant names: Hernán Cortés, Pedro de Alvarado, Martín de Valencia. The Iberian surname and first name that received the members of nobility, including the Spanish “don” that preceded the whole, indicated the nexus with the conquistadors at the same time that showed their privileged status” (my translation).

³⁰ “At the end they are children of the Spanish and they all grow up with their fathers that than pass four or five years they leave the power of the Indian women and they always follow the Spanish side, as the part that most honors them” (my translation).

³¹ “In the second half of the XVI century the Indian towns of central Mexico received, thus, mestizos in the process of Indianization; the children spoke the language of their mother, ate and dressed like the natives that surrounded them and, like them, paid tribute and inherited the possessions of their parents” (my translation).

During the colonial period, the Spanish, along with blacks and the ever-increasing castas, were prohibited from living in the *República de Indios* with the exception of priests (Jackson 4). Despite this prohibition, Lewis points out that mestizos were often placed as *gobernadores* in indigenous communities: “The mestizos or mulattoes appointed then acted in the interests of their Spanish patrons rather than for the Indians they were meant to be serving” (81). The indigenous communities often resented these mestizos. But it would be erroneous to generalize and claim that mestizos served for purposes of indirect rule. The Crown made efforts to prevent social bonds between castas and indigenous people; even the sharing of culture was seen as a threat, and mestizas and mulatto women were forbidden from wearing indigenous’ style clothing. In his study of race and class in Spanish colonial society, Cope points out that the Spanish distrusted mestizos because they were seen as harboring seditious ideas and they might instigate the indigenous population to insurrection.³² A 1578 decree meant to keep the Spanish safe from rebellion, describes blacks, mulattoes and mestizos as ruffians and bad influences on Indians, since they teach them

their bad customs and viciousness and some errors and [ways of] life that can spoil or hinder the fruit desire for the Indians’ salvation, as well as their cleanliness, because from similar company nothing can take hold that improves [the Indians], as mulattoes, blacks and mestizos are *universally inclined to evil*. (qtd. in Lewis 98)

Apparently this ‘inclination’ came both from African blood, in the case of blacks and mulattoes. We should remember that during the later part of the sixteenth century, the word “mestizo” was strongly associated with illegitimacy, which suggests that this law did not include “mestizos” who were born in sanctioned marriages such as those with indigenous nobles.

The Spanish had an ambivalent and at times contradictory treatment of mestizos, at times granting them the rights and privileges of the Spanish, and at others pairing them with the rest of the castas:

By the late sixteenth century colonial law had heavily curtailed the rights of [illegitimate] mestizos; they were forbidden from employing Indian labor, bearing arms without proper permission, claiming Indian nobility status, working as public notaries, and being ordained priests (in the case of illegitimate birth), among other things. (Katzew 40)

But these laws could be maneuvered in case of prominent mestizos who could obtain a *cedula de gracias al sacar*. Mestizos were often used as intermediaries, but because of the proximity with Indians, they were also potential threats. Spaniards were aware of the danger of casta unity, and the potential for revolt:

A quick inspection of the incomplete 1680 codification of colonial laws, the *Recopilación de las leyes de los reynos de Indias*, amply demonstrates that every aspect of the castas’ lives was controlled, including the determination of paying tribute, occupational opportunities, and access to education and ecclesiastical posts. Colonial law even attempted to regulate friendships, dress codes, and marriage choices. (Katzew 41)

³² The focus of Cope’s book, *The Limits of Racial Domination*, is precisely this type of insurrection.

One should be reminded that these laws were enacted in reaction to ongoing unauthorized social practices, the laws were attempts to control a colonial society that was always on the verge of unrest.

There is currently very limited knowledge on the indigenous perspective of mestizaje, and how the indigenous population viewed the castas. Don Francisco de San Antón Chimalpahin Muñón Cuauhtlehuāniztīn, an indigenous Chichimeca who lived from 1579 to 1660, once commented that:

Those who are worthy men, be they mestizos, or mestizas, recognize that they come from us [the Indians]. But others without reflecting, mestizos and mestizas, do not want to recognize that they have some of our blood, some of our color. Only vainly do they attempt to pass for Spaniards, they look down on us, they mock us. Also some Spaniards do that.³³ (qtd. in León-Portilla 110)

We can infer that the acceptance of mestizo children by indigenous people varied, and that mestizos living in indigenous communities most likely identified and were seen as indigenous (Mörner; Bernard and Gruzinski; Lewis). In her discussion of Inquisition cases in the sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century, Lewis found cases of mulattoes and mestizos who dressed in the matter of indigenous people and who practiced non-Christian spiritualities, such as consuming peyote. This speaks of the continuity of indigenous culture among mestizos, as well the cross-pollination between African and indigenous spiritualities. For example, Lewis discusses a 1625 letter by a friar to the Inquisition on behalf of mulattoes and mestizos living in an indigenous village:

The mulattoes and mestizos in question had confessed to eating meat on days prohibited by the church, but the friar did not want them punished for religious offenses because they were born to, and had been brought up by, Indian women in Indian villages. They spoke and dressed like Indians, he wrote, and because they were “in all ways like [Indians]” he believed they should be treated as such: Indians would not have been prosecuted for such violations of religious law, and neither should their sons and daughters be even if, in a strict genealogical sense, they were not Indians themselves. The friar further warned that if these mestizos and mulattoes were prosecuted, there would be trouble in “each of the villages,” a clear indication of the sentimental bonds that could exist between Indians and non-Indians. (Lewis 99)

The friar above admits that these mulattoes and mestizos were “in all ways like” Indians, meaning that they shared the same culture, language and dress. It should also be noted that the friar here recognizes the potential for indigenous revolt, were the Inquisition to prosecute and punish these mestizos. I have quoted Lewis at length because her discussion highlights the fluidity or porosity of identity during colonial Mexico, and that social identity and community affiliation was never simply determined by birth.

“The King counts more than blood”: *Gracias al sacar* and “passing”

³³ This excerpt was originally written in Nahuatl, in Chimalpahin’s *Las ocho relaciones y el memorial de Colhuacan*, translated from Nahuatl into Spanish by Rafael Tena.

As much as Spanish officials wanted to establish rigid social divisions between the castas, individuals could often negotiate their ethno-racial classification. Robert H. Jackson points out that “Indios could change their mode of dress, learn to speak Spanish, move to a city or away from their place of birth, take up a profession generally not associated with the indigenous population, and be reclassified as mestizo exempt from the unique legal obligations of the indigenous population” (6). It was easier for those Indians who lived in the city or worked in haciendas to pass as mestizo. In some parts of the Spanish empire, for example in Bolivia, hacienda owners helped indigenous people be reclassified as “mestizos,” since they “stood to benefit if their permanent workforce gained exemptions from tribute and labor services that took the colonos away from haciendas” (35). Jackson also points out that racial classification was not simply a matter of phenotype, but that well-to-do individuals could influence priests or census takers to record a higher racial status; “On the other hand, humble folk probably had less clout with a priest or census taker, and in this circumstance probably had to accept the status recorded in the official record” (20).

This practice of indigenous people *passing* as mestizos undermined colonial domination because, when successful, it took the power to classify away from the colonizer. In her study of Casta paintings, Magali M. Carrera forcefully shows that, “Colonial exclusiveness began to disintegrate once mestizos, mulattos, and other people of mixed blood slipped into the morisco, castizo, and Spaniard categories” (43). Passing showed that the presumed attributes attached to ethno-racial categorization were fictitious, or at least, unstable. However, this passing also reinforced the system’s categories by recognizing them as valid categories of social differentiation. In Ann Twinam’s analysis of petitions of *gracias al sacar*, she explains that the King could grant a person a *limpieza de sangre*, make him/her a legitimate child, or even grant whiteness. The beneficiaries of the *gracias al sacar* could then live “honorable” lives and be called “Don” or “Doña.” As Twinam points out:

The first component of Spanish discrimination was the never-questioned assumption that the monarch had the power to alter an individual’s rank or heritage. The absence of nobility, or the possession of Jewish, Moorish, heretical, or illegitimate ancestry, was neither theoretically nor even necessarily permanent. What one Spanish historian described so succinctly for purity of blood hold true for nobility and illegitimacy: “The King counts more than blood” (“*Más pesa el rey que la sangre*”). (42)

The king, as a representative of God, could re-assign the place of people in a natural hierarchy. The fact that there were legal means for the changing of a person’s social classification demonstrates that passing did not always undermine the social hierarchy, but could also affirm its validity. The *gracias al sacar* was usually petitioned by well-to-do individuals who wanted to ascend the colonial hierarchy, such as by occupying a more prestigious political position, but because of their background could not do so. That’s why *gracias al sacar* was not privately requested and granted, but publicly showed that the individual’s honor or *calidad* had been re-established. Those that were worthy of receiving the *gracias al sacar* had to be people with honor, or of high *calidad*. It follows that *gracias al sacar* did not come before the achievement of status, but more often reflected the attainment of wealth and privilege. The *gracias al sacar* came when the social climber hit a glass ceiling and the royal decree was necessary to break it. As

Twinam explains: “*Gracias al sacar* petitioners explained that their birth deprived them of honor, and thus the ability to hold honorific posts. Lack of honor had produced a civil death that barred those so marked from most prestigious and authoritative positions in society” (Twinam 47). Thus the King was petitioned to grant by decree what had been denied by birth.

Given that the “indio” category was an imposed identity that meant specific legal, fiscal and labor obligations, it is no surprise that many indigenous individuals often attempted to escape such classification. Escaping the “indio” category, however, often also meant a loss of ethnoracial specificity when it separated the individual from the community. Since for the Spanish all Purepechas were Indios, for example, escaping the Indio category also meant giving up classification as Purepecha. It is this loss of historical and ethnic specificity that Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla understands as “de-Indianization”:

De-Indianization is a historical process through which populations that originally possessed a particular and distinctive identity, based upon their own culture, are forced to renounce their identity, with all the consequent changes in their social organization and culture. De-Indianization is not the result of biological mixture, but of the pressure of an ethnocide that ultimately blocks the historical continuity of a people as a culturally differentiated group. (17)

Retaining an indigenous ethnic identity, and not simply an imposed racialized/colonial one, was specifically hard on the mixed-race populations who were forced to leave their communities of origin to escape tribute responsibility or for the opportunity to earn wages.

De-Indianization also reflected the disruption of communal knowledge and historical memory. The forced removal, as well as the gathering and concentration of distinct indigenous populations into Spanish-styled pueblos for purposes of labor and Christianization, often disrupted tribal and family ties:

The *reducción* policy attempted not only to congregate the indigenous population into larger towns but also to break down ethnic identities. From the perspective of Spanish colonial officials, a single indio population and community political structure more readily permitted a system of indirect rule, which made it much easier to collect tribute and organize labor drafts. (Jackson 26)

In the northern part of Mexico, such as in Baja California and Sonora, the Church imposed restrictions on style of dress and made mandatory the cutting of hair for men. The Spanish also encouraged intermarriage across indigenous groups and with the Spanish as a way to break ethnic ties. Given that indigenous ethnic identity was in great part tied to place and community of origin, the change of place names and baptismal with Spanish names, added to the common experience of migration, contributed to the disruption of self-knowledge (Bonfil Batalla 13-15).

Conclusion: Dressing up like Indians

In 1566 the criollo Alonso de Ávila³⁴ led a group of thirty Spanish men dressed as Indians to the palace of the marquis Martín Cortés; the men were enacting the meeting

³⁴ Son of the conquistador Alonso de Ávila.

between Hernán Cortés, Martín's father, and the Mexica ruler Moctezuma Xocoyotzin.³⁵ This performance was meant as a subtle sign of defiance against the Spanish crown, who at the time was considering abolishing the *encomienda* system by preventing the passing down of *encomiendas* by way of inheritance. Alonso and Gil Gonzales de Ávila, two children of *encomenderos*, were developing a plot to break with the Spanish Crown and establish a new kingdom, with Martín Cortés as king. The plot failed and the brothers were executed for rebellion. However, this set a dangerous early precedent for future criollos, who would also appropriate the indigenous past to serve their own rebellious purposes. And although these Spaniards were willing to dress up as Indians so soon after the invasion and dehumanization of the natives, it should be noted that the reasoning behind this performance was to advocate for the continuation of the *encomienda* system, and not to honor or elevate the status of living indigenous people. Criollos and mestizos did not show significant signs of rebellion until the later half of the eighteenth century, in the figures of fray Servando Teresa de Mier and Carlos María Bustamante. The symbolic appropriation of indigenous people did not begin with mestizos in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but dates back to the sixteenth century to criollos who wanted to distance themselves from Spain. The contours of the discourse of state *indigenismo* and the cult of the mestizo later developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were possible because of a long history of criollo cannibalization of the indigenous: his and her image, history and culture. The appropriations of indigenous people for nation building purposes, as well as how the indigenous was situated in relation to the mestizo after Mexico's independence, will be discussed in the next chapter.

³⁵ Martín Cortés had a half brother by the same name, the son of Cortés and Malinalli Tenépatl.

CHAPTER THREE

Mestizofilia and Indigenismo During the Porfiriato

The 1910 centennial of the beginning of Mexico's Independence was marked with an official month-long celebration sponsored by the government of Porfirio Díaz. The event included theatrical historical reenactments, the expansion of the Museo Nacional, the restoration of Teotihuacán, and the erection of monuments to national heroes on the principal avenue Paseo de la Reforma. By this time Díaz had commissioned a statue of Cuahutemoc, the last Aztec ruler. Through an array of official ceremonies, monuments and buildings, the government of Porfirio Díaz sought to represent Mexico City, and the nation, as heir to a grand indigenous past (Tenenbaum 1994). But while on the one hand Díaz promoted the indigenous past as a national founding myth, on the other he dispossessed indigenous people of their land and even waged genocidal wars against some groups (i.e. Yaquis). This deep contradiction, the simultaneous celebration and rejection of the Indian, was legitimized through the ideologies of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* developed by Mexican intellectuals aligned with the state. This chapter traces the intellectual and historical trajectory of Mexico's hegemonic conceptions of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* ideologies in the work of some key Mexican intellectuals before and during the Porfiriato (1876–1911), and will highlight the continuation of colonial discourses on indigenous people now reshaped by the European scientific racism of social Darwinism and eugenics.

In his seminal work on the ideology of *mestizaje*, Agustín Basave Benítez defines *mestizofilia*, his term for official conceptions of *mestizaje*, as “la idea de que el fenómeno del mestizaje—es decir, la mezcla de razas y/o culturas—es un hecho deseable” (Basave 13).¹ For these Mexican intellectuals, the ongoing *mestizaje* will create a homogeneous mestizo population that will serve as the foundation to a stronger nation. Basave's study focuses on the work of Andrés Molina Enríquez, who conceived *mestizaje* as a sort of biological evolutionary engine, with the Indian serving as an evolutionary stepping-stone. Molina, along with other Mexican intellectuals of the nineteenth century, grounded his theories of nationalism and race in the social Darwinism prominent in Europe as exemplified in the work of Herbert Spencer, who proposed that biology determined the individual and his/her place in society. As numerous scholars have shown, Mexican intellectuals adhered to *mestizaje* as a nation-building tool, one formulated within the logic of biological determinism (Basave Benítez 1992; Florescano 2005; Stepan 1991).

In the context of *Porfirian* nationalism, *mestizofilia* referred to the dominant discursive construction of mestizos as Mexico's ideal citizens, while *indigenismo* referred to the ideological construction of “Indians” as people in need of redemptive intervention as well as their codification as the nation's past. Criollo and mestizo *indigenistas* appropriated the indigenous past as a glorious antiquity, while representing living indigenous people, at best, as objects in need of social uplift and redemption, and at worst, as a national deadweight that retarded Mexico's progress. In *Los grandes*

¹ “... in its broadest connotation, as the idea that the phenomenon of *mestizaje*—that is, the mixing of races and/or cultures—is a desirable fact” (my translation).

momentos de indigenismo en México (1998 [1950]), Luis Villoro understood indigenismo as the “conjunto de concepciones teóricas y de procesos concieniciales que, a lo largo de las épocas, han manifestado lo indígena” (14).² By “lo indígena,” Villoro was referring to non-indigenous intellectuals’ representations of indigenous people, including their history, their bodies, cultures, and place within the Mexican nation. Indigenismo constructed the Indian as an object to be deciphered from the perspective of the Mexican, who was coded as mestizo. In his opening to the book, Villoro states: “Este libro trata de responder a una pregunta: ¿cuál es el ser del indio que se manifiesta a la conciencia mexicana?” (13).³ The fact that Mexican *indigenismo* intellectuals were asking who was the Indian in the Mexican conscience presupposed that the Indian and the Mexican were two separate entities. Villoro explained that his book was not about who indigenous people truly were (as in the matter of their essence), but about those who sought to conceptualize that which is Indian. In the mind of Díaz *científicos*, the conception of indigenous people continued to be tainted by a history of colonialism; the legacy of Spanish racial thinking had now been redesigned by the pseudo-scientific language of eugenics and social Darwinism. Villoro’s work is thus a study of those who make indigenous people the object of their study and/or social projects. This “Mexican conscience,” therefore, does not include the indigenous point of view. Furthermore, *indigenismo* refers to the political and social projects taken by mestizos to paternalistically defend, redeem and incorporate the Indian; either by recuperating the indigenous past as a founding national myth, or by making indigenous people the object of charity and targets of social engineering. As this chapter will demonstrate, the dynamics of *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo* constitute two different axes of Mexican nationalism that should be analyzed together, as the definition of *lo mestizo* depends on the definition of *lo indio*, and given that conceptions of nation, progress, and modernity during the *Porfiriato* were informed by notions of race. Claims of indigenous ancestry by mestizo elites, for example, did not translate into the political and national inclusion of Indians, but these same claims often justified political exclusion by claiming that the Indian element had already been incorporated into the presumably progressive and modern mestizo.

Of concern is the partnership of mutual benefit between the Porfirian state and its group of social scientists, known as *los científicos* for their adherence to Comtean positivism.⁴ The state would point to “scientific” studies and recommendations to legitimize its social policy, and social scientists would gain prominence and secure resources by their association with the state. This attachment to the state colored the intellectual pursuits and findings of these thinkers, and often reflected the social and political projects of the class in power. Among the first proponents of the ideology of

² “the set of theoretical concepts and conscientious processes that, through the length of the [historical] periods, have manifested [that which is seen as] indigenous” (my translation).

³ “This book tries to answer the following question: what is the being of the Indian that is manifested to the Mexican conscience?” (my translation).

⁴ After French philosopher and founder of modern sociology, Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Comte popularized the idea, known as positivism, that the scientific method is the best way to understand and regulate human behavior.

mestizaje as a nation-building project were Francisco Pimentel (1823–1893), Vicente Riva Palacio (1832–1896), Justo Sierra Méndez (1848–1912) and Andrés Molina Enríquez (1868–1940); all influential Mexican intellectuals and politicians who profoundly shaped Mexican nationalism and views of mestizos and Indians. Their conceptions of race and nation were permeated by social Darwinism, and shared in common the belief that biology determined social and psychological characteristics. It was the individual's race and evolutionary state, these authors claimed, that either enabled or hindered national consolidation and progress.

The New Nation As an Extension of the Indian Past

In regards to the appropriation of the Indian past, the *Porfiriato* built upon a nationalist discourse that dates to Mexico's independence. *Criollo*⁵ figures like Dominican friar Teresa de Mier and Carlos María Bustamante⁶ had previously cannibalized the indigenous past as a national origin, thus facilitating a symbolic break with Spain. One of the earliest appropriations of the indigenous past came from professor of astrology and mathematics Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645–1700), who claimed that Quetzalcoatl was in fact Saint Thomas, and that he had previously come to the Americas to preach Christianity.⁷ In an arch built to welcome the new viceroy to Mexico in 1680, Sigüenza y Góngora's design depicted "[a]ll twelve Indian monarchs and leaders who governed the city from 1327-1521... Even Huitzilophochtli... was honored with a statue and emperor status" (Swarthout 49). Singüenza y Góngora, as would later Teresa de Mier, subsumed the indigenous past into a Christian version of universal history, while erasing the specificity and singularity of indigenous history.

David Brading, in *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*, identifies Teresa de Mier and Carlos María Bustamante as two key designers of the national imaginary based on an indigenous past:

Fue [Bustamante], con el padre Mier, quien originó la retórica nacionalista que justificaba la Independencia con base en la presuposición de la existencia de una nación mexicana que existía antes de la Conquista, ahora liberada después de trescientos años de despotismo español. ... También [Bustamante] fue en gran parte responsable de la íntima asociación con el pasado indígena y por ello creó un panteón nacional de héroes en el que Moctezuma y Cuauhtémoc yacían junto a Hidalgo y Morelos.⁸ (119)

Like Singüenza y Góngora, Teresa de Mier also claimed that Saint Thomas had come to the Americas as Quetzalcoatl and had introduced Christianity to the natives. According to him, although the Aztecs had corrupted these earlier teachings of Christianity, the basic

⁵ *Criollo* referred to those of Spanish descent who were born in the Americas.

⁶ Statement, historian and editor of *Diario de México* from 1805 – 1808.

⁷ For a discussion of Quetzalcoatl as Saint Thomas see Jacques Lafaye's *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe*, The University of Chicago Press, 1976.

⁸ "It was [Bustamante], with father Mier, who originated the nationalist rhetoric that justified Independence through the presumption of the existence of a Mexican nation that existed before the Conquest, now liberated after three hundred years of Spanish despotism. ... [Bustamante] was also in great part responsible for the intimate association with the indigenous past and for this reason he created a national pantheon of heroes in which Moctezuma and Cuauhtémoc laid next to Hidalgo and Morelos" (my translation).

tenets were already in existence before the Spanish arrival. His proposal was meant to debunk the main argument of Spanish Conquest, which was that colonization was justified because it Christianized indigenous people. His sermon “was no less than a Creole declaration of the spiritual autonomy of Mexico” (Swarthout 50).⁹ He gave his controversial speech on 1794, December 12th, in honor of the apparition of the Virgen of Guadalupe. In this speech, he claimed to have proof that Saint Thomas was Quetzalcoatl, and that the Virgen’s apparition proved that indigenous people (and by extension mestizos and Criollos) were a chosen people: “¿No es éste el pueblo escogido, la nación privilegiada y la tierna prole de María señalada en todo el mundo con la insignia gloriosa de su especial protección?” (qtd. in Brading 48). As a result of his defiance, Mier was punished with ten years of exile and confinement in Spain. He was spared from the full wrath of the Inquisition because his uncle, Juan de Mier y Vilar, was heading that arm of the Church. The Inquisition described de Mier as possessing “una instrucción muy vasta en la mala literatura” (qtd. in Brading 85).

Carlos María Bustamante was a delegate to the September 13, 1813, Congreso de Chilpancingo (also called Congreso de Anahuac), that gave the first formal declaration of independence. Bustamante discursively constructed the indigenous past as foundation of the new national identity. His effort to popularize the work of indigenous noble and scholar Chimalpahin is an example of criollo efforts to redeem the indigenous image, and elevate the perception of indigenous intellect.¹⁰ Bustamante wrote a speech originally intended to be delivered by José María Morelos at the Congress of Chilpancingo (September 14th, 1813).¹¹ The speech referred to the new Mexican nation as “Anahuac” (the name the Aztec used for their territory) and praised the old indigenous monarchs as symbolic patriots. Bustamante also claimed that Mexico’s war of independence continued the indigenous nation, now embodied by the criollo and mestizo army:

¡Genios de Montezuma, de Cacamatzín, de Cuauhtimotzín, de Xicoténcatl y de Cantzonzi, celebrad como celbrasteis el mitote en que fuisteis acometidos por la pérfida espada de Alvarado, este dichoso instante en que vuestros hijos se han reunido para vengar vuestros desafueros y ultrajes, y librarse de las garras de la tiranía y fanatismo que los iba a sorber para siempre! Al 12 de agosto de 1521 sucedió el 14 de septiembre de 1813. En aquél se apretaron las cadenas de nuestra servidumbre en México Tenoxtitlán, en éste se rompen para siempre en el venturoso pueblo de Chilpantzingo.¹² (qtd. in Brading 78)

⁹ For more on Teresa de Mier see Swarthout 50.

¹⁰ For a discussion of Bustamante’s work, see Susan Schroeder’s “Chimalpáhin, Don Carlos María de Bustamante and the Conquest of Mexico as Cause for Mexican Nationalism.” *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*. México (2008): 287-309. Web. 4 June 2011.

¹¹ The speech was not read as originally written. Bustamante included the original speech in his *Cuadro Histórico* (Brading 78). For a discussion of Morelos’ participation in Mexico’s war of independence, see Meyer, Sherman and Deeds 224-225.

¹² “Geniuses of Montezuma, of Cacamatzín, of Cuauhtimotzín, of Xicoténcatl and of Cantzonzi, celebrate like you celebrated the *mitote* [dance] in which you were assaulted by the treacherous sword of Alvarado, this happy moment in which your children have gathered to avenge your wrongs and assaults, and liberate themselves from

Bustamante referred to the Mexican people as the son's of the Aztec rulers, making them rightful heirs to the indigenous land. Through the struggle of the mestizo and Indian army, the indigenous people were liberated from the "chains of servitude" imposed by Spanish colonization. Thus, Bustamante rhetorically constructed the war of Independence as a war for the decolonization of indigenous people. José María Morelos was also the first to place an eagle perched on a cactus on a rebel flag, symbolically representing the new nation as continuation of the Aztec one.¹³ The criollo and mestizo leaders located a grand national origin in the Aztec past in a similar fashion to the way European nations had appropriated Greek antiquity.¹⁴ However, with the consolidation of criollo and mestizo power in the new State, living indigenous people were displaced from the national imaginary as remnants of a great, but distant, past:

El temprano nacionalismo mexicano heredó gran parte del vocabulario ideológico del patriotismo criollo. Los principales temas—la exaltación del pasado azteca, la denigración de la Conquista, el resentimiento xenofóbico en contra de los gachupines y la devoción por la Guadalupana – surgieron a partir de ese lento, sutil y con frecuencia contradictorio cambio que se operó en las simpatías a través de las cuales los descendientes de los conquistadores y los hijos de posteriores inmigrantes crearon una conciencia característicamente mexicana, basada en gran medida en el repudio a sus orígenes españoles, y alimentada por la identificación con el pasado indígena.¹⁵ (Brading 15)

the tyranny and fanaticism that would have trapped them forever! To the 12 of August of 1521 the 14 of September of 1813 happened. On that first [date] the chains of servitude tightened in México Tenoxtitlán, on this [date] they break forever in the venturous town of Chilpantzingo" (my translation).

¹³ The Aztec's own accounts tell that the god Huitzilopochtli told them to leave their homeland Aztlan and migrate south. They were to re-start their civilization where ever they found an eagle perched on a cactus devouring a serpent. For more on the nationalist appropriation of the Aztec past, see Florescanos' *Historia de las Historias*, 291.

¹⁴ In his essay "Cuauhtémoc Awakened," Christopher Fulton discusses nineteenth century depictions of Cuauhtémoc and notes that during this time politicians, historians and artists "routinely compared Cuauhtémoc and his companions with Greek and Roman heroes, and historical narratives of the Conquest were sometimes written in classical poetical form" (29). Fulton also notes that the "comparison of Aztecs with Greek and Roman nobles extends back to Francisco Javier Clavijero's *Storia antica del Messico...* (published under the name Francesco Saverio Clavigero)" (29).

¹⁵ "Early Mexican nationalism inherited great part of its ideological vocabulary from criollo patriotism. The main themes – the exaltation of the Aztec past, the denigration of the Conquest, the xenophobic resentment against the *gachupines* [Spanish born in Spain] and devotion for the Guadalupana [Virgin of Guadalupe] – emerged from that slow, subtle and frequently contradictory change that operated within the sympathies through which the descendants of the conquistadors and the children of later immigrants created a consciousness characteristically Mexican, based in great part on their

The new national leaders saw the need to create an “imagined community” that did not previously exist.¹⁶ Mexico’s political independence from Spain did not achieve cultural and economic decolonization, but a transfer of power from *Peninsulares* to criollo and mestizo elites. Rather than seek to re-affirm indigenous languages and culture, as Jorge J. Klor de Alva points out, this group “promoted regional Euro-American practices and outlooks ... promulgated the use of Spanish ... and supported Christianity and the church, to the extent it did not get in the way of liberal/republican agendas” (247). The criollos and mestizos that came to power maintained a colonial relation between themselves and the indigenous population. Thus, Independence did not translate as decolonization, “[i]nstead, those who won were the powerful among the illegitimate and legitimate progeny of the mixtures of former colonialists, Africans, and indigenes, who no longer identified themselves as the latter two” (Klor de Alva 270).

The Architects of *Mestizofilia*

In the last half of the nineteenth century, *mestizofilia* pretended to conceptualize the mestizo by first defining the Indian and the European as distinct racial groups positioned at opposite evolutionary poles. While the Indian was constructed as biologically backward and culturally primitive, the European was evolved and culturally modern. This conceptualization was caught within Eurocentric conceptions of progress and modernity, and particularly, with social Darwinism. The Mexican elite saw a causal relation between the physical state of the population and the state of society; in other words, Mexican society and economy reflected the underdevelopment of Indian and mestizo bodies/minds. In his seminal book, *México mestizo: análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enríquez* (1992), Agustín Basave Benítez notes that ever since Mexico’s independence there has been consensus among the elite about the essence of the Mexican nation: “Criollos y mestizos, liberales y racistas, positivistas y románticos llegan a la idéntica conclusión: el mestizaje es la esencia de la mexicanidad” (141).¹⁷ This conceptualization imagines the history of the nation, and the history of the Mexican population, in a linear evolutionary trajectory. The indigenous past, Spanish colonization, racial mixing, are all imagined as one grand and necessary historical trajectory that will eventually culminate in a homogeneous mestizo nation.

Francisco Pimentel

Francisco Pimentel was a founder of the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, and is considered the first historian of Mexican literature. In *Memoria sobre las causas que han originado la situación actual de la raza indígena de México y medios de remediarlo* (1864), Pimentel claimed that the mestizo inherited the best traits of the Spanish and the

renunciation of their Spanish origins, and informed by the identification with the indigenous past” (my translation).

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson argues that a nation is “imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible... for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (7).

¹⁷ “Creoles and mestizos, liberals and racists, positivists and romantics come to the identical conclusion: mestizaje is the essence of Mexicaness” (my translation).

indigenous, nonetheless Pimentel hoped that through continual mixing mestizos would eventually become white.¹⁸

Pero ¿la mezcla de los indios y de los blancos, dirán algunos, no produce una raza bastarda, una raza mixta que hereda los vicios de las otras? La raza mixta respondemos seria una raza de *transicion*; despues de poco tiempo todos llegarían á ser blancos. Además, los europeos desde luego se mezclarían no solo con los indios sino con los mestizos que ya existen, y forman la mayor parte de la poblacion; así es que desde luego resultaria ya una generacion de blancos superior en numero. Por otra parte, no es cierto que los mestizos hereden los vicios de las dos razas, si no es cuando son mal educados; pero cuando tienen buena educacion sucede lo contrario, es decir, heredan las virtudes de las dos razas [sic].¹⁹ (234)

For Pimentel, this “race of transition” could be shaped by a good education, one that would neutralize the vices of the Indian and the Spanish, while accentuating the “virtues” the mestizo inherits.²⁰ Pimentel’s project is one of national consolidation through absorption; the hope is that through constant infusions of white blood, Indian blood will be diluted to extinction. In line with other Mexican intellectuals of the mid 19th century, Pimentel had no hope for the incorporation of indigenous people into the nation as such.

As a prominent *letrados*²¹ of his time, Pimentel was well read in European the biological science. Agreeing with phrenology, a short-lived pseudoscience that claimed to gauge intelligence and personality through cranial measurements, Pimentel stated:

Si acaso es cierto que la capacidad intelectual del hombre puede medirse por la extension del ángulo facial, como quiere el holandés Camper, resulta que el exámen hecho de algunos cráneos mexicanos es favorable á los indios, pues tienen el ángulo de 72, 76, 78 y aun 80°. Esta última

¹⁸ As we saw in the previous chapter, this idea had been in circulation since the 1600s. It was believed that the children of a mestizo and a Spanish created a *castizo*, and the children of Castizo and a Spanish were once again Spanish. For more on the Casta system see Carrera, and Katzew.

¹⁹ “But, does is not the mixing of Indians and whites, some say, produce a bastard race, a mixed race that inherits the vices of the others? To this we respond that the mixed race is a race of *transition*; after a short while they will all be white. On the one hand, the Europeans would immediately mix not only with the Indians, but also with mestizos, who make up the majority of the population; and so eventually will result a white majority. On the other hand, it’s not true that mestizos inherit the vices of the other two races, only when they are badly educated; but the contrary happens when they have a good education, that is, they inherit the virtues of the two races” (my translation).

²⁰ In “Indigenism and Racism in Mexican Thought: 1857 – 1911,” (1959) Martin S. Stabb pointed out that Mexican liberals, such as Pimentel, saw education as the solution to Indian backwardness and were proponents of compulsory education for this population.

²¹ Literally “lettered,” the term referred to the educated class, and was used to distinguish them from the large illiterate population.

medida es la que corresponde á las cabezas de la raza más inteligente, la europea: los negros apenas miden cosa de 70°. ²² (Pimentel 212)

His preoccupation with intelligence reflected a post-Enlightenment privileging of what can be characterized as male Eurocentric notions of reason, one that relied on European sciences while skewing indigenous epistemologies. European sciences of this era, under the false presumption of universality, denied the rationality of indigenous epistemologies, judging them as the products of primitive minds and superstitions. According to the pseudoscience of phrenology, European brains held greater capacity for intelligence, which allowed for the individual autonomy and decision making necessary for self-government. Pimentel and other liberals of his time seem to continue a colonial era racial hierarchy that placed Indians below Europeans and above blacks. While colonial era intellectuals (connected to the Catholic church) justified racial hierarchy through notions of “purity of blood,” European scientists in the post-Enlightenment era attempted to justify it through the idea that some races were some intelligent than others, and that this natural selection created racial social stratification.

Although Pimentel shared the racism of his time and considered the Indian inferior, “flemático, frío en sus pasiones y lento en sus trabajos,” he sought to redeem the Indian, claiming that whatever negative characteristics Indians possessed was the result of their environment:

El maltratamiento que los indios han sufrido siempre, los ha hecho serviles, desconfiados, hipócritas, tímidos, mentirosos y aun pérfidos. ... En fin, todo da á conocer que el indio es egoista: en medio de su flema y de su apatía general le vemos salir de ellas cuando se trata de sus intereses particulares, de su pueblo, de su habitacion ó de sus terrenos: por lo demas, para el indio no hay patria, gobierno ni instituciones, todo lo ve con indiferencia. En resúmen, el indio solo tiene las virtudes propias de la resignacion, resultado natural de los tristes acontecimientos que le han educado. ²³ (214)

Although for Pimentel the Indian was servile and had only the “virtues of resignation,” this was a result of a long history of oppression that had degraded the Indian body and

²² “If in fact it’s true that intellectual capacity of man can be measured by the extension of the facial angle, as the Hollander [Petrus] Camper claims, it turns out that the tests made of some Mexican crania favors the Indians, given that they have angles of 72, 76, 78 and even 80°. This last measurement is the one that corresponds to the heads of the most intelligent race, the European: the blacks barely measure about 70°” (my translation).

²³ “The maltreatment that Indians have always suffered, has left them servile, distrustful, hypocrites, timid, liars and even treacherous. ... In the end, this all makes known that the Indian is egotistical: in the middle of his dullness and his general apathy we see them come out of them when it pertains to their particular interests, or that of their town, or their habitation or their territories; regarding the rest, for the Indian there is no fatherland [country], government or institutions, they see everything with indifference. In conclusion, the Indian only has the virtues proper of resignation, a natural result of the sad events that have educated him” (my translation).

shaped his dispositions. However, Pimentel did not recommend economic or political structural change, but instead suggested that Indians were better served by mixing with whites, which would presumably improve the nation through their eventual disappearance.

Vicente Riva Palacio

Vicente Riva Palacio (1832–1896) was a journalist, historian and influential politician who worked as minister of the department of Development, Colonization, Industry and Commerce under Porfirio Díaz. He is known for directing a monumental five-volume work on the history of Mexico, *México a través de los siglos*,²⁴ to which he contributed the second volume on the colonial era. A central preoccupation of Riva Palacio and other *científicos*, was creating national unity out of a heterogeneous population. In *México a través de los siglos* (1884) Riva Palacio sought to provide an answer:

No basta para constituir una nacionalidad, como ha dicho [Ernest Renán], ni la unidad del lenguaje y de religión, ni la comunidad de intereses, ni la posición geográfica de un territorio ocupado por una gran comunidad de familias, y quizá ni aun la raza, ... pero tampoco basta tener en común una herencia de recuerdos, de glorias ó de sufrimientos nacionales, como quiere ese pensador, para formar el alma de una nación: preciso es el concurso de todos esos factores, porque las naciones, como los individuos, deben tener un espíritu, un alma nacional, pero también un cuerpo, un organismo material igualmente nacional.²⁵ (471)

In order to create a nation, imbued with a national soul, it was not only necessary to create a common culture and history, but also a common race. Through the language of the natural sciences, they presented the national body as a living organism that had to share a common mestizo skin. This national body had a common mestizo blood and a “bronze” soul. “Los hombres sienten y piensan y creen y quieren, no sólo según su particular organismo, sino según la raza á que pertenecen; hay en el hombre, además de la idiosincracia particular, una idiosincracia de raza ...” (471).²⁶ This biological determinism not only shaped the individual, but also the national body. His racialized

²⁴ According to Enrique Florescano, this historical text is the first of its kind, one that sought to unite the different peoples and histories of the territory into one grand national narrative (“Patria y nación en la época de Porfirio Díaz” 166).

²⁵ “It is not enough to build a nationality [nation], as been said by [Ernest Renán], neither the unity of language and of religion, nor the community of interests, nor geographical location of a territory occupied by a great community of families, and perhaps not even race... but it is also not enough to have in common an inheritance of memories, of national glories or sorrows, as that thinker argues, to form a nation’s soul: precisely is the concourse of all those factors, because nations, like individuals, must have a spirit, a national soul, but also a body, a material organism equally national” (my translation).

²⁶ “Men feel and think and believe and want, not only accordingly to their particular organism, but according to the race to which they belong; there is in man, in addition to his particular idiosyncrasy, an idiosyncrasy of race” (my translation).

version of nationalism was meant to justify the *científicos*' grand project of social engineering.

It is curious that Riva Palacio, as a historian, would reference Renán's original text "What is a Nation" (1882), where he argued that "To forget and—I will venture to say—to get one's history wrong, are essential factors in the making of a nation; and thus the advances of historical studies is often a danger to nationality" (145). In this light, Riva Palacio's work can also be seen as a project of historical fabrication, which was as much about forgetting those histories that did not fit the official national narrative, as it was meant to create a grand history that would cannibalize the diverse histories of the territory. Renán argues that there are two key components derived from both the past and the present. "A heroic past, great men, and glory—I mean real glory—these should be the capital of our company when we come to found a national idea" (153). Its present citizens are supposed to see the nation as a unit "formed by the realization of sacrifices in the past, as well as of those one is prepared to make in the future" (153). For Riva Palacio, the fabrication of historical memory was not enough, a new nation required a new race. Through historical invention the nation appears as the natural outcome of biology, all coded through prophetic language of the soul.

Talking about the formation of castas during colonization, Riva Palacio's distinction between mulattos and mestizos is telling of the racial thought of the mid-nineteenth century:

El atavismo era muy común en la casta de los mulatos, no sólo por la *preponderancia de transmisión* de la raza negra, sino porque la indígena carece absolutamente de este poder. El atavismo de raza no se manifiesta nunca entre los mestizos descendientes de indio reproduciendo los caracteres puros de esa raza; y si el principio de la herencia hace alguna manifestación, es siguiendo siempre la línea española...²⁷ (472)

Since Spanish traits overwrite indigenous ones, mestizaje is a process that leads to whiteness. On the other hand, mixing with Africans is a process that leads to more blackness, given that it is these traits that dominate. Biological mestizaje modifies the Spanish traits, and in about "one or two centuries", according to Riva Palacio, the "true" Mexican will emerge. At the same time, Riva Palacio attributes to "la raza indígena" a "state of corporal evolution and perfection." For Riva Palacio, the indigenous is in a state of rapid evolution. Just as Pimentel had done, he creates distance from the African (who is presumably doomed to never evolve) and disowns him/her of the national patrimony. These racial "atavism," the reappearance of African traits as evolutionary regressive, continues an early colonial understanding of *castas*, in which the offspring of the African could never become white, where as the children of Spanish and mestizo could. It is telling of Riva Palacio's own internalized racism that he fails to mention that his

²⁷ "Atavism was very common among the mulatto casta, not only for the *preponderance of transmission* of the black race, but also because the indigenous [race] absolutely lacks this ability. The atavism of race never manifests among the mestizos descendants of Indian race reproducing the pure characteristics of that race; and even if the principle of heredity makes any manifestation, it always follows the Spanish line" (my translation).

grandfather, President Vicente Guerrero, was part African, and thus according to his logic, he would have possessed these so-called recessive African traits.²⁸

In *México a través de los siglos*, Riva Palacio made repeated references to Charles Darwin's and Herbert Spencer's work to try to prove the advanced physical, although not intellectual, evolution of the Indian. For example, Riva Palacio pointed to the Indian's little presence of body hair and strong dental structure as evidence of physical superiority (475-476). He visually and discursively constructed the Indian through images of indigenous bones (jaws and teeth) and through anecdotal observation. Of notice is Riva Palacio's observation of mountain dwelling indigenous people:

En algunas de la sierras de México, como en la de Oaxaca y al oriente del estado de Hidalgo, la costumbre de caminar con carga ha modificado de tal manera el funcionamiento en los músculos de los indios, que no les es posible caminar de prisa ni hacer largos viajes, si no llevan a cuestras algún peso. Asi es que, aunque vayan simplemente como correos, forman con piedras una carga que se echan a la espalda para llegar más pronto y con mayor facilidad y descanso a su camino.²⁹ (475, note 1)

The Indian was thus constructed as physically different to the Spanish and mestizo; suggesting that the Indian's physical structure correlated to his place in society's structure as exploitable labor; the Indian was tough, and in fact, 'needed' to carry a heavy load. Through a discourse rooted in the European sciences, Riva Palacio naturalized indigenous exploitation, as had early Spanish colonizers through the language of Renaissance Christianity. And even if the Indian body was superior to that of whites, Riva Palacio argued that through mixing with other races, these features either disappeared or were modified. Thus the mestizo could not be equally exploited since he had already been modified by European blood, and lost his Indian toughness.

As a *científico* of President Porfirio Díaz, Riva Palacio led the construction of a colossal monument of indigenous leader Cuahutémoc in the avenue Paseo de la Reforma (Tenenbaum, "Streetwise History" 136-143). This was part of an earlier project to beautify this main avenue, while converting it into a sort of historical teaching tool for the general population. As stated by Riva Palacio:

Public monuments exist not only to perpetuate the memory of heroes and of great men who deserve the gratitude of the people, but also to awaken in some and strengthen in others the love of legitimate glories and also the love of art, where in those monuments one of its most beautiful expressions is to be found. (qtd. in Tenenbaum, "Streetwise History" 135)

The unveiling of the Cuahutémoc monument in 1887 was accompanied by an official ceremony. A central theme among the speeches and publications to the event was the

²⁸ Vicente Guerrero served briefly as Mexico's president in 1829. He was among the first to propose the abolishment of slavery (González y González 33).

²⁹ "In some of the sierras of Mexico, like the one of Oaxaca and to the east of the state of Hidalgo, the custom of walking with a load has so modified the functioning of the muscles of the Indians, that it is not possible for them to walk fast or make long trips, if they do not carry a load. So that is why, even if they are going simply as messengers, they form with rocks a load that they throw on their backs so in this way arrived sooner and with more ease and rest to their destination" (my translation).

centrality of the Aztecs in the national imaginary, placing other indigenous people in the margins, or even casting those who cooperated with the Spaniards, such as the Tlaxcalans, as traitors (Tenenbaum, “Streetwise History” 136). “As a result Cuautémoc and the Aztecs became synonymous with the entire republic, regardless of the fact that at the time of the conquest there were perhaps as many as two or three hundred Indian groups living in the territory that became known as New Spain” (Tenenbaum, “Streetwise History” 136).

Díaz and the *científicos* also promoted Mexico’s archeological investigation as a way to teach the population, and the world, about Mexico’s indigenous past. For the centennial of the beginning of the Independence movement, Teotihuacan was restored and made into Mexico’s first official archeological site: “The government placed guards at ruins, strengthened federal legislation over artifacts, and in 1885 established the first agency exclusively to protect them, the General Inspectorate of Archeological Monuments of the Republic” (Bueno 217). Then in 1897 the government passed a law, *Ley de Monumentos Arqueológicos*, which nationalized all ruins (Bueno 2010). The Museo Nacional housed in its Room of Monoliths the pre-Columbian statue of Coatlicue, the sun stone (a.k.a. “Aztec Calendar”), the stone of Tizoc; all meant to show the greatness of Mexico’s antiquity.³⁰ The centennial celebrations were organized by the *científicos* to display to Mexicans and the world their advancements towards modernization, as well as the grandeur of Mexico’s Indian past. That same year, at the request of Mexican intellectuals, the 17th International Congress of Americanists was held in Mexico to coincide with the Centennial (Florescano 2005; Bueno 2010). Ethnographers, anthropologists, geographers, and all sorts of intellectuals flooded the capital of Mexico to share their findings on the indigenous past. The state funded and oversaw the Museo Nacional, and made possible, for example, the studies of Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio on the ruins of Teotihuacan.

Although neither liberals nor conservatives were immune to the prevalent racism of the time, liberal views did contrast with those of conservatives who saw indigenous people as savages doomed to backwardness and servitude. For example, Otto Peust, German sociologist and *científico* who served Díaz as Director of the Department of Agriculture of the Secretary of Development, argued that when classifying the world’s races, it was better to divide them into three general economic systems corresponding to their level of evolutionary development: 1) the Caucasian race distinguished by industrial capitalism; 2) some among the “yellow race” who seem to be capable of “imitating the system of industrial capitalism,” like the Japanese; and lastly,

El tercer grupo comprende la mayoría de los pueblos indígenas de África, de América, de gran parte de Asia, etcétera, y dispone de un grupo tan reducido de hombres enérgicos y perseverantes que sólo ha logrado formar el gremio agrícola . . . Los individuos de este grupo parecen incapaces de imitar, como los del segundo, la producción capitalista . . . En relación con

³⁰ “It was during the Porfiriato, in 1885, that the government hauled the artifact commonly known as the Aztec Calendar from the Mexico City cathedral, where it had been embedded in the west tower for almost a century, and hung it at the center of the museum, a placement still found in the National Anthropology Museum of today” (Bueno, “Forgando Patrimonio” 221).

el grado de inferioridad de una raza ... los individuos que la forman resultan por su propia naturaleza, trabajadores libres, obligados o esclavizados.³¹ (qtd. in Bartra 74–75)

In line with biological determinism, the Indian was assigned by his nature to “forced labor or slavery.” Echoing Renaissance theologians who used Aristotle to argue that Indian’s were “natural slaves,” this era saw “scientific” justification for the enslavement of indigenous people.³² Peust lamented that given the large number of indigenous people in Mexico, making up the largest group in the nation, it was not possible to deal with them the way that the United States and Argentina had done, through extermination and forced removal. Given that it was not possible to “deshacerse del elemento indígena [que] parece a muchos inútil” (75), Peusts suggested that they must be “replaced” through the immigration of “razas más activas” (more active races) like Europeans. Although compared to Otto Peust, Riva Palacio’s project of compulsory education and mestizaje offered a more benevolent racism, it was no less racist and no less detrimental to indigenous people because of its benevolence.

The work of Porfirian *científicos* and intellectuals such as Vicente Riva Palacio and Otto Peust institutionalized mestizofilia through laws, education, government programs, and national monuments with such force that it continued to lead México’s nation building program during and after the Mexican revolution. Justo Sierra exemplifies the continuation of Porfirian era *mestizofilia* and the one developed by the post-revolutionary government.

Justo Sierra

Justo Sierra was an influential intellectual and politician during and after the Porfiriato. Among his accomplishments, was the founding of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).³³ In his influential *The Political Evolution of the Mexican People* (1900-1902),³⁴ Justo Sierra wrote a macro-history of Mexico that included the indigenous past and the colonial period. In a revisionist move, he called the mestizos of the colonial period “the new family born of the two races, the real Mexicans” (101). Throughout his account, he used the term “mestizo” and “Mexican”

³¹ “The third group comprises the majority of the indigenous peoples of Africa, of [the American continent], of great part of Asia, etcetera, and have such a reduce number of energetic and persevering men that they have only been able to form an agricultural class... The individuals belonging to this group seem incapable of imitating, as do the ones of the second, capitalist production... In relation to the degree of inferiority of a race... the individuals who form it result be their own nature, in [either] free, forced or enslaved labor” (my translation).

³² Recall that Franciscan Bishop Juan de Quevedo made the claim in 1519, and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda had made the claim 1550 that indigenous people where natural slaves. For a discussion of the Spanish justification of indigenous and African slavery, see chapter two of this dissertation.

³³ Although the university’s antecedents date to the mid-sixteenth century, its modern form is owed to the efforts of Justo Sierra.

³⁴ The book was published in two parts, the first part in 1900 and the second in 1902.

interchangeably, as if they were synonymous. It is from the mestizo population that Justo Sierra hoped a powerful middle class would form:

The division of races, which might be expected to complicate classification [of social classes], has had a steadily diminishing influence as an obstacle to social evolution since the intermediate mestizo has grown steadily more numerous; in him the dominant middle class has its center and its roots. (360)

As his concluding remarks, and after much praise of then President Porfirio Díaz, Sierra advocated for European immigration as a way of introducing the “European blood” that would further Mexico’s progress:

We need to attract immigrants from Europe so as to obtain a cross with the indigenous race, for only European blood can keep the level of civilization that has produced our nationality from sinking, which would mean regression, not evolution. We need to bring a complete change in the indigenous mentality through education in the school. This is our great, our urgent obligation, and we must comply with it promptly or we are lost. (368)

Sierra’s insistence on European immigration was based on his belief that only pure Europeans and indigenous could create mestizos. Mestizos procreating with indigenous people would dilute European blood, and would produce an inferior mestizo-Indian offspring. The other prong of his proposal was to educate Indians as way of social uplift. Sierra’s work exemplified the twin ideologies of mestizofilia and indigenismo: to create a mestizo population through European migration, while seeking to Europeanize indigenous people through education. Of notice is the urgency of Sierra’s words, which portrayed the nation on the verge of evolutionary decay.

Andrés Molina Enríquez

This preoccupation with the evolutionary state of the Mexican population was better articulated by Andrés Molina Enríquez (1865–1940), who through a mastery of social Darwinist thought, proposed mestizaje as the foundation of the Mexican nation and the solution to its problems. Mexican scholar Agustín Basave Benítez succinctly summarized Molina’s main thesis:

[L]a tesis mestizófila de Andrés Molina Enríquez... parte de la premisa de que los los mestizos de México, entre los que él incluye fundamentalmente a quienes poseen un linaje mixto hispano-indígena, son los mexicanos por antonomasia, los auténticos depositarios de la mexicanidad, y pretende demostrar ... que México no puede convertirse en una nación desarrollada y prospera mientras no culmine su proceso de mestizaje y logre homogenizar en lo étnico la población mediante la fusión racial de las minorías de indios y criollos en la masa mestiza.³⁵ (*México mestizo* 13)

³⁵ “[T]he mestizophilian thesis of Andrés Molina Enríquez... departs from the premise that the mestizos of Mexico, among which he includes those who fundamentally possess a mixed Hispanic-Indigenous lineage, are the mexicans by antonomasia, the authentic depositaries of mexicaness, and pretends to demonstrate... that Mexico cannot become a developed and prosperous nation until the process of mestizaje is finalized and

Molina served various government posts before and after the Mexican revolution, his political career stands out for drafting Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, which instituted the ejido land system. Molina served as judge, newspaper editor, professor of ethnology at the National Museum, and after the fall of Porfirio Díaz, worked closely with the new government in matters of land reform (Basave 2001). Molina's best known book is *Los grandes problemas nacionales* (1909), where he discussed national issues like land ownership, the place of mestizos within the political system, and the evolutionary state of the population. For his exposé and advocacy of these issues, he is often called the "precursor" of the Mexican Revolution, for although he was an open supporter of the *Porfiriato*, he attributed to the mestizo a revolutionary restlessness that would lead to social unrest.

In his work, Molina Enríquez makes use of European intellectuals such as Charles Darwin, Ernst Haeckel, and Herbert Spencer to present his argument that the mestizo was endowed with great evolutionary force. Although Molina understood mestizaje as both biological and cultural mixing, his argument is dominated by the logic of biological determinism. Molina states: "El elemento étnico llamado a hacer la nacionalidad mexicana, había sido formado por el cruzamiento del elemento étnico español y del elemento étnico indígena, y era el elemento mestizo" (Molina Enríquez *La Reforma* 41).³⁶ For Molina, the existence of different "races" prevented the consolidation of a *patria* (fatherland) because he believed that there existed a natural racial distrust between the indigenous and the criollo (for Molina the African presence was "insignificant"). He believed that compared to criollos and Indians, mestizos were "more patriotic" (271). It was then up to the mestizo to create the Mexican patria, since according to him, mestizos had a common culture and shared the same evolutionary state, which was fundamental in the creation of a true nation (Molina, *Los grandes* 306).

Molina, like other *científicos*, was a great admirer of social Darwinist Herbert Spencer.³⁷ Social Darwinist thought became popular during the later half of the 19th century, in part because it justified a new wave of European imperialism, as Kelley R. Swarthout points out: "Social Evolutionists developed an elaborate paradigm supporting imperial expansion by the lighter-skinned nations of the world based on the genetic inferiority of darker-skinned, colonized peoples" (9). Fundamental to the social Darwinists' view, was the assumption that the different human races were destined to mortal conflict, and hence, only the "fittest" would survive. Spencer also believed that the mixing of two different races produced an inferior breed and even sterility. Molina dismissed Spencer's idea of sterility, but he did agree that the mixed race offspring in some respects were inferior, and that more than one race could not peacefully coexist in the same society. Molina believed that México's diversity created disorder, and that only

has succeeded in homogenizing the population in ethnic terms by means of a racial fusion of the Indian minority and criollos into the mestizo mass" (my translation).

³⁶ In the same work, he would also add: "Como los mestizos estaban unidos a la raza indígena por la sangre... podían decir con justicia que eran los verdaderos patriotas, los verdaderos fundadores de la nacionalidad, libre de toda dependencia civil, religiosa y tradicional" (Molina *La Reforma* 59).

³⁷ Spencer is known for coining the phrase "survival of the fittest" in his *Principles of Biology* (1864).

a dictatorship such as that of Porfirio Díaz could prevent the races from killing each other as it was their ‘natural’ tendency. Molina praised Díaz for having known that authoritarianism was the necessary remedy to the chaos created by racial diversity, as he put it, “organización coercitiva, de cooperación obligatoria, verdaderamente militar, integral” (Molina, *Los grandes* 64).³⁸ He saw the concentration of power as necessary, pointing out that “jamás se han encontrado en un mismo territorio tantos elementos de raza y tan distintos los unos de los otros, por su origen, por su edad evolutiva y por sus condiciones...” (*Los grandes* 66). Furthermore, Molina stated that “a mayor libertad individual no corresponde mayor, sino menor progreso; los individuos de mayor libertad, son los salvajes; a medida que el progreso avanza y que la civilización florece, la libertad individual se restringe” (261). Molina agreed with the brutal repression and enslavement of the Yaqui and other indigenous rebellious groups by Díaz, stating that “they deserved nothing other than repression and punishment” (71). In practice, this “appropriate treatment” consisted of body mutilation, indigenous removal, and slavery.

In *Los grandes problemas nacionales*, Molina made the following general observations about indigenous people, mestizos and criollos: “todos los indígenas son pasivos, impassibles y taciturnos; que todos los mestizos son enérgicos, perseverantes y serios; y que todos los criollos son audaces, impetuosos y frívolos” (331).³⁹ While he attributed to the indigenous physical superiority, the criollo possessed “mayores capacidades de percepción, mayores aptitudes de comprensión, mayores fuerzas de raciocinio, mayores facultades de expresión, y mayores seguridades de suficiencia.”⁴⁰ Thus Molina continued an earlier colonial belief that Europeans were “gente de razón” (people of reason), in other words, intellectually superior to indigenous and African people.

Besides adhering to Charles Darwin’s and Herbert Spencer’s view of evolution and natural selection, Molina also drew from other European social Darwinists like Ludwig Gumplowicz, who doubted the equality of the human races. In his seminal analysis of Molina’s work, Basave identified some unifying threads in the work of these thinkers:

Todos ellos tienen un común denominador: suscriben el principio de la lucha por la supervivencia y sus consecuencias depuradoras de la especie, el cual adoptan del darwinismo social o, mejor dicho, del espencerianismo biológico. Más aún, todos son parientes intelectuales de la versátil escuela del pensamiento racista europeo que va del Conde de Gobineau a Le Bon

³⁸ “coersive organization, of obligatory cooperation, truly military, integral” (my translation).

³⁹ “all indigenous people are passive, impassive and taciturn; all mestizos are energetic, persevering and serious; and all the creoles are audacious, impetuous and frivolous” (my translation).

⁴⁰ “great capacity of perception, greater aptitudes of comprehension, greater forces of reason, greater powers of expression, and greater securities of [self] sufficiency” (my translation).

y que incluye en sus filas a gente como Buffon, De Paw y Robertson.⁴¹
("Estudio Introductorio" 25)

Molina's scaffold his *mestizofilia* on these thinkers, and because at the same time he sought to redeem the mestizo against some of their racist views, his work ends being full of contradictions. For while on the one hand he upheld these pseudoscientific theories of white supremacy, on the other he had to step outside of social Darwinism (borrowing from Lamarckism) to argue for the evolutionary potential of both Indians and mestizos.

Molina conceptually placed the Indian and the Spanish at opposite poles, with two distinct evolutionary trajectories, and each with contrasting dispositions. When Indians and Europeans mixed their traits synthesized in the body of the mestizo. Much of the disagreement with Spencer, and social Darwinism in general, seems to stem from the belief that these European scientists did not have enough knowledge of the mestizo, and that they mistakenly uniformly applied the biological laws to both animals and humans. As Molina argues in *La Reforma y Juarez* (1905),

Como Spencer lo demostró suficientemente, los productos sociales híbridos que él cree infecundos, porque los productos híbridos zoológicos lo son, absorben los defectos y vicios de los productos puros de que se derivan y pierden toda afinidad por los mismos productos puros, quedándose desprendidos de éstos.⁴² (58)

Thus Molina naturalized the historical process of Indian racialization and mestizo/a de-Indianization, obscuring the workings of racism and discrimination as causes of mestizo disidentification with the indigenous. For Molina, the loss of Spanish or indigenous cultural specificity and identity had little to do with a history of colonial racialization and targeted discrimination of indigenous people; instead he attempted to pass these historical events as the result of biological/natural processes, and thus his biological explanations obscured the workings of power. In *La Reforma y Juarez* (1905), he added:

De la absorción de los defectos de las razas primitivas, los mestizos adquirieron las locuras de Don Quijote sin el buen sentido de Sancho; la afición a las aventuras, el carácter inquieto y altivo, la vanidad, la pereza y la embriaguez; pero no tomaron ni la sumisión indígena al poder, ni el espíritu religioso y caballeresco español.⁴³ (58)

⁴¹ "They all have a common denominator: they subscribe to the principle of the struggle for the survival and purification of the specie, which they adopt from social Darwinism or, better said, from biological Spencerianism. Furthermore, they are all intellectual kindred of the versatile racist school of European thought that goes from the Comte de Gobineau to Le Bon and that includes in its ranks people like Buffon, De Paw and Robertson" (my translation).

⁴² "As Spencer sufficiently demonstrated, the socially hybrid products that he believes to be infertile, because hybrid zoological products are, absorb the defects and vices of pure products from which they derive and lose all affinity for the same pure products, ending up detached from them" (my translation).

⁴³ "Of the absorption of the defects of the primitive races, the mestizos acquired the madness of Don Quijote without the good sense of Sancho; the fondness for adventures, the restless and arrogant character, the vanity, the idleness and the

For Molina, the product was defective but not hopeless, since the mestizo was destined to evolutionary grandeur. Since the mestizo did not inherit “indigenous submission to power, nor the religious and chivalrous spirit of the Spanish,” he was the only one capable of creating the Mexican nation.

Molina’s work often reads like a contradictory amalgamation of European evolutionary thought. Although heavily influenced by Darwin, who denied that humans could successfully intervene in the evolutionary process or guide human evolution, Molina held French biologist Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck’s view that the environment shapes the evolutionary process. Lamarck argued that it was possible for parents to acquire characteristics in life that could be passed down as inheritance to their children.⁴⁴ Even though Darwin discredited Lamarckism, Latin American intellectuals continued to use his theories, favoring a less fatalistic view of evolution. In her seminal study of eugenics in Latin America, Nancy Ley Stepan points out that although Latin American intellectuals accepted the inferiority of indigenous and African people, they liked the idea that through manipulation of the social environment, at least the racially mixed offspring could be brought out of evolutionary backwardness. Molina’s mestizofilia rested on the scientific assumption that the different territorial environments had originally facilitated the creation of the world’s races: “De modo que una *raza* no es, en suma, más que un conjunto de hombres que por haber vivido largo tiempo en condiciones iguales de medio han, llegado a adquirir cierta uniformidad de organización, señalada por cierta uniformidad de tipo” (Molina, *Los grandes* 35).

Molina’s understanding of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1885) went as follows: the fittest or best adapted of each geographical zone evolve and grow in numbers and eventually make up a specific race; after their zone cannot contain their population, this race then expands to neighboring zones, and in doing so, enters into conflict with the people of that zone; the result is either the destruction of the colonized race, or biological mixing and change, which can result in a new race; this mestizo race must then break with the parent races and gain its independence from them. In the case of Mexico, the mestizo was presumably aware of this need to break with the Spanish and Indian “races” and impose his will on them: “Todos los grupos mestizos tenían un mismo ideal: desprenderse de los demás elementos de raza y sobreponerse á ellos” (*Los grandes* 41). Molina thus paints a scenario of division and distrust, a racial schism that could not be bridged because of the laws of nature. The mestizo does not serve as a bridge to unite the Spanish and the Indian groups; the mestizo aimed to rid himself of the Spanish rule and the Indian complacency, eventually purging them from the new nation. The mestizo’s aversion for the Spanish and Indian stemmed, according to Molina, from first being rejected by the parent races when they saw in him the vices of the other:

En conjunto, los mestizos, como todos los productos híbridos, reflejan los defectos y vicios de las razas primitivas, por lo que eran repugnados por ellas, y ellos a su vez, y por la misma razón, sentían aversión por las características dominantes de las razas primitivas. Tenían que ser así: los

drunkenness; but they did not take neither the indigenous submission to power, nor the religious and chivalrous spirit of the Spanish” (my translation).

⁴⁴ For an in-depth discussion of eugenics and its influence on Latin American thinkers, see Stepan.

criollos a la sazón representantes de la sangre española, veían en los mestizos los vicios y defectos de la raza indígena; los indígenas, los vicios y defectos de la raza española.⁴⁵ (*Los grandes* 41)

As a mestizo himself, Molina's comments can now be read as the outcome of the internalized racism on the part of mixed race Mexican elites; his claim that "the mestizo type was and is of inferior race" contrast with his own celebration of the mestizo's indigenous ancestry (his grandmother was either fully Otomí Indian or mestiza).⁴⁶ Although Molina often upheld his indigenous ancestry as a proud racial badge (Basave 2001), he nevertheless held the racist view that indigenous people were naturally submissive and intellectually inferior.

In contrast to Pimentel and Justo Sierra, Molina did not believe that education would improve the social condition of indigenous people, since education did not translate as biological evolution. Molina found it necessary to "always remind" those who believed in the redemptive quality of education "que los indígenas están en su estado actual, no por ignorancia, sino por atraso evolutivo..." (*Los grandes* 118). Molina believed that the evolutionary state of each group could be discerned by their mode of land use. For example, nomad tribes did not practice individual private ownership of the land, clear sign for Molina that they were further behind in evolution. For him, the highest state of land use was individual private ownership. Therefore, the slow process of indigenous evolution was better served through private ownership of the land: "el desenvolvimiento activo de la propiedad, serán las causas primordiales" (328). This view will lead him to advocate, after the Revolution of 1910, for the ejido communal system, not as an end in itself, but as a transition to private ownership.

When comparing the evolutionary development of the Spanish and Indian races, Molina made a distinction between *evolutionary* state ("evolución") and natural *selection* ("selección"). Evolutionary state referred to general human evolution, and was the result of territorial expansion and conflict with other races. Natural selection referred to a race's level of adaptation to their specific environment. While Molina attributed to the Spanish a higher evolutionary state, he contended that the indigenous enjoyed a higher state of natural selection. Although in terms of evolutionary state the Indian and mestizo were behind Europeans, they had the advantage of their physical strength, result of "selection":

Esto indica de un modo evidente, que si las razas blancas podían considerarse superiores a las indígenas por la mayor eficacia de su acción, consecuencia lógica de su más adelantada *evolución*, las razas indígenas podían considerarse como superiores a las razas blancas por la mayor

⁴⁵ "As a group, mestizos, like all other hybrid products, reflect the defects and vices of the primary races, for which they were repudiated by them, and [the mestizos] in turn, and for the same reasons, felt aversion for the dominant characteristics of the primary races. It had to be this way: the criollos who at the time represented the Spanish blood, saw in the mestizos the vices and defects of the indigenous race; the indigenous, the vices and defects of the Spanish race" (my translation).

⁴⁶ In his biographical sketch of Molina, Basave points out that Molina's claim that his mother was a "pure Indian" is difficult to corroborate, given the lack of records. However, Basave suggests that it is more likely that the grandmother was mestiza ("Estudio Introductorio" 11, note 2).

eficacia de su resistencia, consecuencia lógica de su más adelantada selección.⁴⁷ (257-8)

Molina claimed that the Indian's energy of "resistance," in the long run, will outlast the European's energy stemming from "action." Furthermore, he believed that the Spanish evolutionary peak had already occurred, and that the indigenous enjoyed an accelerated evolutionary momentum that would culminate in a superior race (once it mixed with the Spanish). The mestizo offspring benefited from both evolutionary characteristics; from the Spanish he gained evolution/action, and from the Indian he acquired an advanced selection/resistance. And as Molina pointed out, "las energías indígenas se muestran en creciente desarrollo en los mestizos,"⁴⁸ suggesting that through biological mestizaje, the mestizo gained evolutionary momentum. Molina here agreed with Riva Palacio in that the indigenous people were in a process of rapid evolution, in contrast to the Europeans, whose evolutionary force had been decreasing. I have already quoted Riva Palacio in a previous section, but since Molina also provides the quote, it is worth repeating his claim that the indigenous were in a "periodo de perfección y progreso corporal, superior al de todas las otras razas conocidas" (qtd. in Molina, *Los grandes* 248).⁴⁹ To summarize, the Indians biological adaptation to the Americas had endowed them with greater strength, endurance/resistance, and a defensive stance in relation with the other human races; the Spanish enjoyed a more advanced evolution that had resulted from their conflict with other races and because of geographical movement, which made the Spanish more active and aggressive in comparison to Indians. The mestizo/a synthesizes these evolutionary traits: "Los mestizos son energéticos porque reflejan de los indios y los españoles la energía común a las dos razas, aunque esa energía haya sido de distinta naturaleza, pues era de defensa en los indios y de agresión en los españoles; son generalmente perseverantes, porque en ellos se conjugan el impulso volitivo español y la lenta sensibilidad indígena..." (Molina, *Los grandes* 331).⁵⁰ Even though Molina had previously agreed with Riva Palacio in that mestizaje was a process of whitening (given that the Indian lacked "atavism," and the mestizo was a "transition race"), Molina later affirmed that the mestizo was no more than an Indian "modified" through mestizaje: "la raza mestiza no es, en suma más que la raza indígena modificada ventajosamente por la

⁴⁷ "This indicates in a clear way, that if the white races could be considered superior to the indigenous for their [white's] greater efficiency of action, logical consequence of their more advanced evolution, the indigenous races could be considered superior to the white races for their greater efficiency of their [indigenous] resistance, logical consequence of their more advanced selection" (my translation).

⁴⁸ "indigenous energies show themselves in increasing development in the mestizos" (my translation).

⁴⁹ "perfecting period and state of corporal progress, superior to that of all the other known races" (my translation).

⁵⁰ "Mestizos are energetic because they reflect from the Indians and the Spanish the common energy of the two races, even though this energy had been of distinct nature, since it was of defense in the Indian and of aggression in the Spanish; they are generally persevering, because in them combines the Spanish volatile impulse and the slow indigenous sensibility..." (my translation).

sangre española...” (263).⁵¹ When these two races mixed, Molina believed, the resistance/strength of the Indians allowed them to dominate the Spanish biological traits, modifying them to the mestizo’s advantage. But even with these biological improvements, the mestizo did not distinguished itself “ni por su hermosura, ni por su cultura, ni en general por las condiciones de su incomparable adaptación al medio, por las cualidades de su portentosa fuerza animal” (*Los grandes* 263).⁵² Although the mestizo was an Indian improved by the white element, Molina believed that in the future it would be a total different race given the ongoing evolution made possible through the engine of mestizaje.⁵³

Throughout *Los grandes problemas nacionales*, Molina provides a few “scientific notes” to support his overall view of the importance of biological mestizaje for nationalism. On his note on evolution, for example, Molina stated that “evolution will always be the result of selection,” while at the same time making a distinction between *individual* and *collective* evolution. Within a group, he believed, the primary form of evolution was *individual*, which ensured that the strongest, that is, “the fittest” survive. Collective evolution was the result of territorial expansion and of the struggle between groups. According to Molina, Europeans had the benefits of collective evolution, result of their coming out of Europe and colonizing other races, and thus possess more “perfect unities” or nations, necessary for warfare against other nations. In contrast, the type of evolution dominated by “individual selection,” as that of the indigenous people, created larger and physically stronger populations. In accordance with social Darwinism, Molina believed that the different races were in constant conflict and formed part of a larger process of natural selection. It is for this reason that Molina hoped that the mestizo population would eventually grow to “fifty million,” and be strong enough to succeed in the “inevitable clash with the American race to the north” (266).

In another “scientific note” Molina made a curious analogy between sexual intercourse and the creation of nations. In coded language for ejaculation, he called sperm an “agregado celular” which the body was in need of expelling since this extra weight interfered with its cohesion. Man needed to expel this aggregated cellular mass “naturally,” through intercourse with his wife: “Él organismo se siente mal con lo que le sobra, y al expulsarlo, experimenta una sensación de placer, tanto más intensa cuanto más le importuna lo que necesita elimina y cuanto más esfuerzo le cuesta eliminarlo” (*Los grandes* 274). For Molina, the union between man and woman result in a complete being. This composite being has divided natural responsibilities and functions. The man was in charge of providing food and protecting the composite/total being, and the woman was in charge of reproduction and care of the children. This view of a divided organism,

⁵¹ “the mestizo race is nothing more than, in conclusion than the indigenous race modified advantageously by the Spanish blood...” (my translation).

⁵² “Neither the indigenous nor the mestiza, even with the improvements it has accomplished, distinguishes itself... neither from its beauty, nor its culture, nor in general by the conditions of its incomparable adaptation to the environment, by the qualities of its portentuous animal strength” (my translation).

⁵³ As I discuss in chapter four, in 1925 José Vasconcelos echoed Molina’s earlier claim that the mestizo/a was a transitional race that will eventually culminate in a new and superior race.

although co-dependent, attributed to the woman weakness and greater dependency: “La dependencia entre los dos organismos sexuales es tal, que la mujer no puede proveer a su alimentación sino por la mano del hombre, y el hombre no puede expulsar los excesos celulares sino a través de la mujer” (275). While the woman depends on man for protection and food, the man only needs the woman for release of cellular “excesses.” For Molina the superiority of man over woman was obvious, and just as the races seemed to have a natural place within a greater human hierarchy, women too were confined by nature to the home under the authority of their husbands. He criticized feminism as “absurd,” given that “society is harmed by the work of women” (276). The mutual dependency of man and woman was what lead a man to marry and protect a woman, “la mujer es un sistema de órganos dependiente del organismo total cuya principal parte es el hombre” (276).⁵⁴ As man released his cellular excesses and the family expanded, it led to the creation of society. The honor and authority given to the father eventually led to the worship of the ancestors (dead fathers), which in turn lead to the creation of organized religion to worship God/Father. Molina conceived society as a congregation of brothers who had one common Father-God. Through the authority and veneration of fathers, he believed, nations were formed and maintained.

Although Andrés Molina Enríquez at first rejected Francisco Madero’s call for revolution, he quickly changed his mind and on August 23rd 1911 when he published his “Plan de Texcoco” calling for the dissolution of the existing government and for a general uprising. Because of his defiance to Díaz, Molina was arrested and spent less than a year in prison (Basave, “Estudio Introductorio” 16) After the revolution, Molina drafted Article 27th of the 1917 Constitution, which successfully established the communal land system, or *ejido* system. President Plutarco Elías Calles would later give Molina official authority in the interpretation of Article 27th of the 1917 Constitution, making him president of the Confederación Nacional Agrarista in 1925. This was the same year in which José Vasconcelos publishes his well-known essay *La Raza Cósmica*. Although Vasconcelos did not referenced Andrés Molina Enríquez in his essay, a reflection of Vasconcelos’ critique of social Darwinism, it is clear that Molina’s work influenced his view of racial mestizaje.

Conclusion

Although the Mexican revolution of 1910-1921 brought about major changes in Mexican society, including much-needed land reform, it did not radically undermined the colonial relation between Mexico’s white, mestizo, African, and indigenous populations. As it had been with the post-Independence government, the post-revolutionary government did not incorporate the indigenous or African populations as full citizens. Influential figures like José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio continued to define the indigenous as “problems” in need of paternalistic intervention. Ironically, these intellectuals saw themselves as defenders of the indigenous cultural patrimony. After the Mexican Revolution of 1910, intellectuals aligned with the new government continued to cement *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo*, the subject of my next chapter.

⁵⁴ “woman is a system of organs dependent on the organs of the total organism [being] whose principal part is the man” (my translation).

CHAPTER FOUR

(R)Evolutionary Mexico: José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio

We have been at heart Spaniards even when we have had to fight against Spain, and we remain Indian even when our skin accidentally becomes whitened through marriage with the more recent Spanish stock. In this way the half-breed cannot entirely go back to his parents because he is not exactly as any of his ancestors; and being unable to connect fully with the past, the mestizo is always directed toward the future—is a bridge to the future.

– José Vasconcelos, “The Latin American Basis of Mexican Civilization,” 83.

Para incorporar al indio no pretendamos “europeizarlo” de golpe; por el contrario, “indianicémonos” nosotros un tanto, para presentarle, ya diluida con la suya, nuestra civilización, que entonces no encontrará exótica, cruel, amarga e incomprensible. Naturalmente que no debe exagerarse a un extremo ridículo el acercamiento al indio.¹

– Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria*, 96.

The intellectual and political work of Manuel Gamio and José Vasconcelos profoundly shaped the form and content of Mexican nationalism, specifically in regards to its official ideologies of mestizaje and *indigenismo*. These two early twentieth century Mexican intellectuals agreed that it was not possible to be both Indian and Mexican, and so they proposed to solve the “Indian problem” through cultural and racial mestizaje. The quote by Vasconcelos I use to open discussion for this chapter exemplifies the discursive continuity of a colonial and nineteenth century belief that saw racial mixing as producing an alienated offspring, who then must carve a separate social space, and identify with a new third racial identity. Vasconcelos relied heavily on the language of philosophy and did not shy away from invoking religion to claim that mestizaje and cultural development followed a divine plan. Manuel Gamio’s quote typifies the dual nationalist discourse of indigenous incorporation and exclusion, one that seeks to incorporate the indigenous past, while seeking to convert living indigenous people into “Mexicans,” that is, mestizos. Gamio advocated for the paternalistic tutelage of indigenous people by trained ethnologists, who armed with the tools of the social sciences, would presumably guide native people into the door of a modern mestizo civilization. His discourse of mestizaje,

¹ “To incorporate the Indian let’s not pretend to “Europeanize” him all at once; on the contrary, let us “Indianize” ourselves a little, so as to present him, already diluted in his, our civilization, which he will then not find exotic, cruel, bitter and incomprehensible. Naturally this approach to the Indian must not be exaggerated to a ridiculous extreme” (my translation).

even when referring to cultural mixing, went hand in hand with the negative racialization of indigenous people. In this chapter I discuss *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo* as two complementary sides of the dominant nationalism formulated after the 1910 Mexican Revolution through the influential work of Gamio and Vasconcelos, two intellectuals affiliated with the new state who discursively positioned themselves as visionaries gazing simultaneously into the past, present, and future of the Mexican nation. In the first part of this chapter I will discuss Gamio's *Forjando Patria* (1916) and his lectures in Chicago for the Harris Foundation, which were published in *Aspects of Mexican Civilization* (1926). In the second part, I will examine Vasconcelos' *La raza cósmica* (1925), *Indología* (1926), as well as his own lectures given for the Harris Foundation and that were also published in *Aspects of Mexican Civilization*.

The work of Manuel Gamio continued the earlier positivism of the Porfirian *científicos*, placing faith in the social sciences to understand and regulate human phenomena. At the same time, Gamio's theories were also significantly influenced by the "cultural relativism" school as developed by United States anthropologist Franz Boas, who was critical of European racism and biological determinism. Vasconcelos, in contrast, was critical of the social sciences, and instead resurrected a religious discourse to critique social Darwinism and its view of racial mixing. But rather than see Gamio's and Vasconcelos' work as conflicting nationalist projects, we should see them as complementary projects that, together in their distinct way, helped shaped what Michel Foucault called a "regime of truth":

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (*Power/Knowledge* 131)

The "truth" claims of Gamio and Vasconcelos during the first part of the twentieth century navigated a circuit of "truth" composed of the hegemonic logic of European and Euroamerican science and Christianity; truth could only materialize (i.e. as social policy) only through these pathways, at the same time that other truths (such as that of indigenous people) were silenced. The epistemological weight given to European sciences, however, did not necessarily conflict with the power of religion to 'make truth.' Gamio's *indigenismo* and José Vasconcelos' *mestizofilia* functioned fully as complementary discourses competing for the center of their nation's "regime of truth."

In post-Revolutionary Mexico the new state and its intellectuals entered into a mutually beneficial relationship, one that worked to validate government social policy with the 'truth' claims of intellectuals. As Beatriz Urías Horcasitas points out in *Historias Secretas del Racismo en México*:

Entre los temas abordados por la antropología, la sociología y la demografía, entre 1920 y 1940 dominaron aquellos que estaban en la agenda del nacionalismo posrevolucionario: la integración racial de la población mediante el mestizaje y el de la definición de referencias culturales que permitieran pensar la unidad social. El trabajo en torno a

esta temática estuvo a cargo de científicos sociales que se insertaron en el aparato del Estado para llevar a cabo la “misión” política de transformar y modernizar a la sociedad. (85)

Under the support and direction of the state, social scientists set themselves the task of measuring, cataloging, dissecting and treating the national body, which was seen as suffering from the social sickness of heterogeneity and a backward indigenous culture. Gamio, as the head of various government and academic positions, and Vasconcelos as Mexico’s first Minister of Education and Rector of the National University, were both strategically positioned to formulate and carry on the country’s homogenization and national consolidation through the social policy guided by their *mestizofilia*² and *indigenismo*. And rather than serve as bridge to bring different cultures and people together, their formulation of mestizaje was more of a “melting pot”-like project meant to erase the cultural diversity and the living presence of indigenous people. David Brading is correct when he states:

Indigenismo was thus a means to an end rather than an enduring mission: if incorporation was its aim, then essentially it sought to destroy rather than fortify the peasant culture of native communities. Modernizing nationalism of the brand advocated by Gamio certainly found consolidation in past glories but its inner vision was based on the liberal resolve to transform a backward country into a modern nation able to defend itself from foreign hegemony. (“Manuel Gamio” 77)

Thus in the first half of the 20th century, Mexico’s much celebrated *indigenismo* was a project carried on by mestizos to Europeanize indigenous people and turn them into Eurocentric mestizos through racial and cultural mixing. The erroneous characterization of Gamio and of Vasconcelos by some U.S. Latino/a intellectuals as egalitarian models of multiculturalism and racial inclusion is a telling blind spot this chapter seeks to illuminate.³

Gamio’s *Indigenismo*

For Manuel Gamio it was “unquestionabl[y] urgent, most urgent, to investigate the indigenous population of Mexico scientifically,” in order to speed the process of “racial, cultural, and spiritual fusion to secure unification of tongue and equilibrium of economic interests. This, and only this, can place the Mexican nation as a nation, upon a solid, logical, consistent, and permanent base” (“The Indian Basis” 127). For his pairing of anthropology with nation building, Manuel Gamio is often considered the intellectual father of both Mexican modern anthropology and *indigenismo*. In her study of the history of racism in Mexico, Urias points out that after the Mexican revolution the ideology of mestizaje and *indigenismo* came together to inform government social policy and projects, particularly “las investigaciones antropológicas dieron consistencia ideológica al

² *Mestizofilia* is a term developed by Mexican scholar Agustín Basave Benítez to refer to the dominant view that racial and cultural mixing was a desirable phenomena, as discussed in chapter three of this dissertation. See his book *México mestizo: Análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enríquez*.

³ The introductory chapter of this dissertation has already referenced the work of Gregory Rodriguez, Francisco H. Vázquez, and the National Council of La Raza as examples of this misrepresentation.

nuevo Estado mediante la formulación del indigenismo, lo que hizo del mestizaje el eje de la integración de los grupos indígenas a la modernidad” (Urías 60).

In 1916 Gamio published his influential book, *Forjando Patria* (*Forging the Nation*), where he laid out his proposal for solving the nations problems through homogenization. In 1917 he was appointed to head the newly established Department of Anthropology under the Secretary of Agriculture and Development. By this point Gamio had studied in the United States with Frantz Boas at the University of Columbia (1909–1911), where he received a doctorate for his work on the restoration of Teotihuacán and his ethnological study of that living population. Gamio was influenced by Boas theories of “cultural relativism,” which he used to critique the then prevalent idea that the different human races occupied different evolutionary stages, usually placing whites (Arians) at the forefront. Gamio believed that living indigenous societies could serve as windows into the past from which the anthropologist could learn about pre-Hispanic civilization; as when he states that the “tradición indígena, realista, vigorosa y pintoresca, nos deja mirar cómo era y cómo pasaba la vida de los mexicanos antes que llegara la Conquista...” (*Forjando Patria* 65).⁴ As if the indigenous “other” lived in a time bubble, Gamio believed the indigenous needed to be brought into modernity through cultural mestizaje. In his report on the ruins of Teotihuacan (1922), he stated:

The extension and intensity that folkloric life exhibits in the great majority of the population [of the valley of Teotihuacán], eloquently demonstrates the cultural backwardness in which that population vegetates. This archaic life, which moves from artifice to illusion and superstition, is curious, attractive and original. But in all senses it would be preferable for the population to be incorporated into contemporary civilization of advanced, modern ideas, which, if stripped of fantasy and traditional clothing, would contribute in a positive manner to the conquest of the material and intellectual wellbeing to which all humanity ceaselessly aspires.⁵ (qtd. in Brading, “Manuel Gamio” 84)

For Gamio, indigenous culture might be picturesque and interesting to study, but in terms of national development, indigenous culture must be sacrificed on the altars of “Progress” and modernity. Of notice is Gamio’s usage of the word “vegetates,” a word he commonly deploys when referring to indigenous people. In this same report Gamio emphasized the urgency of anthropologists entering indigenous communities and educating them: “Si esta población es abandonada a sus propios esfuerzos, continuará vegetando dolorosa y anormalmente y seguirá constituyendo una masa pasiva y obstruyente para el progreso local y para el nacional, como ha sucedido durante los siglos coloniales y el siglo XIX...” (*La población* LXXXVI).⁶ This organic metaphor was not unexpected from a man of

⁴ “indigenous tradition, realist, vigorous and picturesque, allows us to look how it was and how the life of Mexicans passed before the Conquest...” (my translation). For a discussion of this “denial of coevalness” see the work of anthropologist Johannes Fabian, *Time and the other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (1983).

⁵ Brading cites this excerpt from Gamio’s *La población del Valle de Teotihuacán* (1922).

⁶ “If this population is left to their own efforts, it will continue to vegetate painfully and abnormally and will continue constituting a passive and obstructive mass

science of his time, given the then dominant Eurocentric view of nature as an object to be studied and indigenous people as overtly a part of nature. While Gamio insisted in portraying mestizos as active or imbued with dynamism, as in his image of the blacksmith forging a fatherland, indigenous people were portrayed as passive as plants.

Gamio's *indigenismo* was in fact about national inclusion, but one based on authoritarianism, social engineering, and forced Eurocentric assimilation. In *Forjando Patria* he emphasized the need to create a homogenous nation through mestizaje: "... esta homogeneidad racial, esta unificación del tipo físico, esta avanzada y feliz fusión de razas, constituye la primera y más sólida base del nacionalismo" (13). Gamio pointed to Germany, France, and Japan as models of nationalism Mexico should emulate. He argued that a successful nationalism and the creation of a "patria" must meet three main criteria:

1º Unidad étnica en la mayoría de la población, es decir, que sus individuos pertenecen a la misma raza o a tipos étnicos muy cercanos entre sí. 2º Esa mayoría posee y usa un idioma común, sin perjuicio de poder contar con otros idiomas o dialectos secundarios. 3º Los diversos elementos, clases o grupos sociales ostentan manifestaciones culturales del mismo carácter esencial... la mayoría de la población tiene iguales ideas, sentimientos y expresiones del concepto estético, del moral, del religioso y del político. ... el recuerdo del pasado, con todas sus glorias y todas sus lágrimas, lo atesoran los corazones como una reliquia...⁷ (*Forjando Patria* 8)

This was the key to Gamio's nationalism: racial and cultural homogeneity imposed through the enlightened policies of Europeanized mestizo and white intellectuals. Gamio believed that Mexico's heterogeneity was an obstacle to national unity because people remained attached to what he called "small nations" (*pequeñas patrias*). In addition, Gamio argued that the nation's heterogeneity led to "intellectual stagnation" (*estancamiento intelectual*): "La heterogeneidad étnica persistirá largo tiempo, como obstáculo para nuestra producción intelectual" (101). For Gamio, heterogeneity was problematic because it included deficient or backward mentalities stuck on primitive forms of thinking. Mexican intellectuals, for all their claims to being revolutionary, could not imagine a different model of nationalism than the one already set by European nations. Neither did they dare see the possible alternatives that indigenous forms of government represented, nor the significance of the persistence of indigenous cultural forms and worldviews. Furthermore, Gamio's reductionism often explained social and

for the local and national progress, as has happened during the colonial centuries and the nineteenth century..." (my translation).

⁷ "1st Ethnic unity in the majority of the population, that is, that its individuals belong to the same race, or to closely related ethnic types. 2nd That the majority possess and use a common language, without detriment to the use of other languages or secondary dialects. 3rd The diverse elements, classes or social groups demonstrate signs of a common culture essential even with all its differences in appearance and intensities in relation to economic and physical conditions and intellectual development of such groups. ... the majority of the population has equal ideas, sentiments, and expressions of aesthetic, moral, religious, and political concepts. ... the memory of the past is treasured in their hearts like a relic..." (my translation).

economic problem as stemming from a lack of mestizaje, as if racial mixing was a solution to discrimination, the inequalities produced by capitalism, and the neocolonial status of Latin America in relation to Europe and the U.S.

In *Forjando Patria*, Gamio made use of the blacksmith and welding metaphors to illustrate how the new nation had to be wielded into being through strong determination and conviction. The new mestizo created by the revolution now wielded the hammer, which he pounded on the raw materials of “Spanish steel” and “indigenous bronze” to give it shape. These metals did not mixed well enough during colonization, and that had been the source of the nation’s problems. With Independence, the national blacksmiths, “varones olímpicos” (Olympian men), once again

empuñaron el mazo épico y sonoro y vistieron mandil glorioso. Eran Bolívar, Morelos, Hidalgo, San Martín, Sucre... Iban a escalar la montaña, a golpear el yunque divino, a forjar con sangre y pólvora, con músculos e ideas, con esperanza y desencanto, una peregrina estatua hecha de todos los metales, que serían todas las razas de América.⁸ (*Forjando Patria* 5)

But the project failed, once again, and the mestizo statue was left incomplete and came undone: “Todavía no era tiempo. El milagro se deshizo.” The new nations attempted to forge a statue made entirely of Spanish iron, and ignored the indigenous bronze. Now, the revolutionaries of Mexico (like himself) had the mission of retaking “el mazo y ceñir el mandil del forjador para hacer que surja del yunque milagroso la nueva patria hecha de hierro y de bronce confundidos” (6).⁹ Here it might be useful to compare Gamio’s nation building metaphors to the “melting pot” of the United States. The metaphor of ironwork (anvil, hammer, fire) suggested that a more arduous process was needed to homogenize and assimilate the population than that of the United States’ “melting pot.” Mexican intellectuals often credited the success of U.S. nationalism to the mixing of what they believed to be similar European races. Since the mixing of these similar peoples was an easier process, merely requiring white Europeans to adopt the English language, the metaphor of the melting pot sufficed; the U.S. national stew required less heat and force to make. But in Mexico and Latin America, according to Gamio, such dissimilar races need a stronger fire. Not the odorous melting pot, but the strong fire of nationalism to melt the racial metals, and the hard cold anvil (of the social sciences) to shape the new racial mix.

Gamio’s View of Indigenous Culture

As stated before, Gamio saw the continuation of indigenous culture, which he considered “primitive,” as responsible for Mexico’s social problems:

⁸ “they took up the epic and sonorous hammer and wore the glorious apron. They were Bolivar, Morelos, Hidalgo, San Martín, Sucre... They were going to climb the mountain, to strike the divine anvil, to forge with blood and powder, with muscles and ideas, with hope and disenchantment, a pilgrim status made from all the metals, which were all the races of America [the Americas]” (my translation). Gamio here was referencing the Greek myth of the blacksmith Hephaestus (or its Roman equivalent, Vulcan).

⁹ “[take on] the hammer and gird the apron to make arise from the miraculous anvil the new nation [fatherland] of confused iron and bronze” (my translation).

El indio defendió y aún defiende su herencia cultural, siendo esto lo que en realidad lo mantiene en los estratos sociales inferiores, pues esa cultura, por pintoresca o interesante que sea, resulta anticuada e ineficiente para competir en la pugna social con la cultura del tipo europeo. El ascenso individual o aislado del indio, se debe precisamente a que abandonando la tradición cultural autóctona se incorpora resueltamente a la cultura de tipo europeo.¹⁰ (*Hacia un México Nuevo* 133)

Gamio's *indigenismo* program sought to send trained anthropologists to indigenous communities on "civilizing" missions. He claimed that only anthropologists were equipped to educate the indigenous population, and were able to sort out the useful from the useless cultural elements. Typical of the ideology of *mestizofilia*, and with close resemblance to United States' "melting pot" ideology, Gamio advocated incorporating only selected indigenous elements, mainly their arts and crafts. Attempts by teachers and missionaries to educate the indigenous had failed because, according to Gamio, they had failed to understand that the indigenous continued to live in an essentially "prehispanic" culture, from which he/she could not be abruptly shaken. The conversion to the Catholic religion, the teaching of reading and writing, and the introduction of technology were not enough, as these did not represent fundamental changes in the indigenous worldview. Citing more fully the passage from which this chapter's epigraph is taken, Gamio argued that Mexican mestizos Indianize themselves sufficiently (since for Gamio the mestizo was not an Indian) in order to more effectively and gradually Europeanize the Indian:

Naturalmente que ese baño civilizador no pasó de la epidermis, quedando el cuerpo y el alma del indio como era antes, prehispánicos. Para incorporar al indio no pretendamos "europeizarlo" de golpe; por el contrario, "indianicémonos" nosotros un tanto, para presentarle, ya diluida con la suya, nuestra civilización, que entonces no encontrará exótica, cruel, amarga e incomprensible. Naturalmente que no debe exagerarse a un extremo ridículo el acercamiento al indio.¹¹ (*Forjando Patria* 96)

The goal was to bring the Indian in sync with contemporary mestizo culture, which was no longer "prehispanic" but Mexican. Previous attempts to "civilize" the Indian had failed, according to Gamio, because they had been superficial attempts that had not penetrated his body and soul; these "civilizing" showers were not even skin deep. What was then necessary was for the anthropologist, who knew the Indian culture, and who had

¹⁰ "The Indian defended and still defends his cultural heritage, when this is what in reality keeps him in the inferior social strata, since this culture, picturesque or interesting as it might be, results antiquated and inefficient to compete with the European type. The individual or isolated ascent of the Indian, is owed precisely to abandonment of his autochthonous culture and his resolute incorporation to culture of the European type" (my translation).

¹¹ "Naturally this civilizing shower did not pass through the epidermis, leaving the indigenous body and soul as it was before, prehispanic. To incorporate the Indian lets not pretend to "Europeanize" him all at once; on the contrary, lets "Indianize" ourselves somewhat, so as to present, already diluted in his, our civilization, which then he will not find exotic, cruel, bitter or incomprehensible. Naturally one must not exaggerate to a ridiculous extreme this approximation with the Indian" (my translation).

the ability to cautiously change himself (like a chameleon) to indigenous culture. The anthropologist-educator in disguise thus descends (culturally, but also temporally) into the indigenous world. The anthropologist was a Prometheus-like figure bringing the fire of science and European culture. But this proximity with the indigenous was simply a strategical maneuver, a means to open the hermetically sealed world of the Indian and force him/her to be receptive to European culture. Gamio's warning that one must not carry this "Indianization" to "ridiculous extremes" is telling of his own disdain for indigenous culture. For if the project was to bring the Indian closer to European culture, and not for the nation to remake itself based on an indigenous worldview.¹² Gamio doesn't explain what these extremes are, but one can assume that they refer to serious revalorization of indigenous culture, forms of government, and spirituality.

In many respects, Gamio offered *Forjando Patria* as a sort of blueprint or manual for the new government. One of its main premises was that those who govern must by necessity know ("científicamente el modo de ser") those whom they govern. For Gamio the Indian body and his culture had to be studied, dissected, and transformed: "it would be of special interest to investigate carefully the actual anatomical, physiological, and pathological conditions of our natives, as well as their peculiar social organization; their economic situation; religious, moral, and artistic ideas; commercial, industrial, and cultural phenomena" ("The Indian Basis" 136). The only appropriate way then for government to know its population was through anthropological study. Like the phrenologists of his time who sought to measure the skull to determine intellectual capacity, Gamio wanted to measure the working potential of indigenous muscles: "Es intrigante así mismo el problema de su economía animal, pues no encontraremos sino en muy pocos países, unidades humanas cuyo rendimiento sea tan elevado con relación a la exigüidad del alimento" (21). Gamio was surprised, and at the same time encouraged, that even with minimal food the Indian worked longer than other races with similar or better diets.¹³ In other words, the indigenous body was constructed as an efficient machine, and it was the race that "possesses the most physical energies" (94). Gamio also enthusiastically advocated for the substitution of a corn-based diet by one based on soy, which according to him, had made the Japanese prosper. Unfortunately standing in the way of indigenous progress was his/her mental "evolutionary state": "con criterio etnológico, podrá verse que el indio conserva vigorosas sus aptitudes mentales, pero vive con un retraso de 400 años, pues sus manifestaciones intelectuales, no son más que una continuación de las que desarrollaban en tiempos prehispánicos..." (*Forjando Patria* 95). It was not the indigenous body that obstructed national progress, but his culture and his mental habits. The Indian, although possessing superior physical strength, "desgraciadamente no sabe, no conoce los medios apropiados para alcanzar su liberación,

¹² President Lázaro Cárdenas would later echo Gamio's view in a 1940 speech given at the Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, when he stated: "Como expresé en reciente ocasión, nuestro problema indígena no está en conservar indio al indio, ni en indigenizar a México, sino en mexicanizar al indio." The speech has been digitized by the University of Texas from *Los presidentes de México ante la nación: informes, manifiestos y documentos de 1821 a 1966*.

¹³ Gamio's claim is hardly original. See chapter three for a discussion of Vicente Riva Palacio's construction of the indigenous body as naturally disposed to hard labor.

le han faltado dotes directivas, las cuales sólo se obtienen merced a la posesión de conocimientos científicos y de conveniente orientación de manifestaciones culturales” (94). For Gamio the Indian could not “awaken” on his/her own, it was up to the social scientists to show him/her the benefits of modern civilization.

Gamio’s role in the creation of indigenista state policy could be equated, as David Brading has pointed out, to a doctor who: “probed native culture in the spirit of a pathologist analyzing the physical decay of the patient” (“Manuel Gamio” 84). As such, it prescribed as social remedies a strong dosage of Europeanization and the redeeming benefits of mestizaje. Although the cliché says that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger, in this case what kills the Indian (his/her culture, language, etc.) would make the mestizo national body stronger. Gamio was like a surgeon trying to amputate the indigenous out of the national body. The patient resisted the procedure. He believed that the Indian resisted “European civilization” as a kneejerk response to a foreign intrusion, and “porque desconocemos los motivos de dicha resistencia, no sabemos cómo piensa el indio, ignoramos sus verdaderas aspiraciones, lo prejuizamos con nuestro criterio, cuando deberíamos compenetrarnos del suyo para comprenderlo y hacer que nos comprenda. *Hay que forjarse – ya sea temporalmente – una alma indígena* [my italics]” (25). Thus this temporary “indigenous soul” would served the anthropologist as a sort of disguise, like a virus that wears the membrane of the friendly cell, only to fool and gain access to the body. Gamio disagreed with the view that speaking Spanish and claiming to be a Catholic was proof of a successful assimilation. The Catholicism then practiced by indigenous people, whom he called “pagan Catholics,” consisted of “a strange hybrid of superstition and idolatrous religious concepts, very far in essence from the principles of Roman Catholicism” (“The Indian Basis” 111).

Gamio’s analysis of Mexican society, in *Forjando Patria*, would not have been complete without a discussion of Mexican women, whom he divided into three general types. The first type consisted of who he called “la mujer sierva” or servile woman, “que nace y vive para la labor material, el placer o la maternidad,” although he appreciated her passivity, she was not the type of woman Mexico needed for progress. The second type was the socially irresponsible “*mujer feminista*” or feminist woman, for whom sexual pleasure “es deportivo más que pasional; la maternidad, actividad accesoria, no fundamental; sus tendencias y manifestaciones masculinas; el hogar, sitio de reposo ...” (119)¹⁴ Furthermore, “[e]l feminismo no está en la ocupación, ni en la profesión, sino en el carácter; debiera denominarse ‘masculinismo,’ porque es la tendencia que tienen algunas mujeres de masculinarse en hábitos, en ideas, en aspecto, en alma y... hasta físicamente, si estuviera en su alcance conseguirlo” (128).¹⁵ Gamios noted with relief that in Mexico there were very few feminists. The third type of Mexican woman, and the one he considered “the ideal woman,” was the “*mujer femenina*” or feminine woman. The

¹⁴ “it’s for sport more than it is for passion; maternity, accessory activity [useless], not fundamental; her tendencies and mannerism are masculine; the home, a place to rest ...” (my translation).

¹⁵ “feminism is not found on the job or in the profession, but on the character [of these women]; it should really be called ‘masculinism,’ since it is the tendency of some of these women to masculinize [sic] their habits, ideas, appearance, soul and... physically, if it were within their means to achieve it” (my translation).

feminine woman was motherly, “[e]l sacrificio por los hijos, no es en ella, sacrificio ni obligación, sino supremo goce. . . . El bienestar, la fuerza, la belleza física, la plenitud de vida actual y futura de los hijos, constituyen su deseo capital, el objeto primordial de sus desvelos” (130).¹⁶ Given Gamio’s faith in eugenics to guide human reproduction, this seemed to suggest that the ‘good woman’ would choose her partner guided by an eugenicist ideal to birth a superior Mexican race: “Cuando México sea una gran nación, lo deberá a muchas causas, pero la principal habrá de consistir en la fuerte, viril y resistente raza, que desde hoy moldea la mujer femenina mexicana” (130).

Gamio and Eugenics

Gamio often emphasized the need for mestizaje to be guided by the principles of scientific eugenics, that is, using science to identify individuals of “superior” physical and mental traits, and encourage their reproduction, while at the same time discouraging the reproduction of “inferior” types. This mestizo eugenics would presumably lead to greater racial perfection:

[I]t is necessary that the three big groups of our population—indigenous, mestizo, and white—come together, mix, and become confused [*se acerquen, se mezclan y confundan*] until they manage to homogenize and unify the racial type, procuring through the application of a sensible eugenics, to cultivate the satisfactory physical gifts and correct the defective ones.¹⁷ (qtd. in Buffington 141)

It is worth mentioning that Gamio served as Vice-president of the Second International Congress of Eugenics, held in New York in September, 1921. There he proposed that a “sensible” eugenics would require the continual immigration of Europeans, suggesting as Justo Sierra had before him, that mestizos marrying indigenous would not produce a good enough European-Indian balance. To bring attention to the benefits of eugenic reproduction, Gamio founded in 1920 the anthropological journal *Ethnos*. As Urías points out,

La propuesta de integración indígena de Manuel Gamio en los años veinte estuvo vinculada a la propuesta de depuración medico-higiénica inspirada en la eugenesia, y al pensamiento criminológico que planteaba la necesidad de imponer medidas de profilaxis social que tomaban como punto de referencia la variable de la herencia racial. (88)

Urías points to publications such as *Futuro*, *Crisol*, and *Hoy*, as evidence of the influence of eugenics policies and the prevalence of the view that the government needed to implement policies that would reduce the populations of inferior races and increase through immigration those of Europeans. Although there were those that advocated for sterilization and other invasive approaches (negative eugenics), for the most part, Mexican eugenics did not take the extreme aspects that it did in the United States and its forced sterilization campaigns. There were also no major government policies aimed at

¹⁶ “[t]he sacrifice for her children, is not in her, obligatory sacrifice, but supreme joy. . . . The wellbeing, the strength, the physical beauty, the fullness of present and future life of her children, constitute her primary desire, the primordial object of her efforts” (my translation).

¹⁷ The quote is from page 4 of Gamio’s article “Pueblos Nuevos,” published in the anthropological journal *Quetzalcoatl*, 2.3 (September 1930).

controlling marriage choices or promoting the abortion of children of “inferior” types (after all, Mexico defined itself as a Catholic country). Instead, Mexican eugenicists emphasized the elimination of social vice as a way to influence heredity. For example, they saw alcoholism and lack of hygiene as detrimentally shaping the indigenous body, and transmitting these “defects” to their offspring as genetic traits. In “*The Hour of Eugenics*”: *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*, Nancy Leys Stepan points out that, in general, Mexican eugenicists saw racial mestizaje as uplifting the mestizo offspring to a higher biological state than that of the Indian, but not that of the European: “With the exception of the anthropologist Manuel Gamio, almost none of the eugenists maintained that fusion with the Indians would provide benefits for the Europeans” (151). Gamio believed that “only by intense mixing with Indians could the Europeans in Mexico gain the advantages the Indians had acquired in their adaptation to Mexico’s climate and geography through centuries of harsh natural selection” (151 note 39). Gamio continued Andrés Molina Enríquez’s earlier argument that indigenous people, although evolutionary backward, still had the advantage of a more advanced natural selection.¹⁸

As part of his *indigenista* policy, Gamio supported primary and trade education to indigenous communities, as well as promoted state sponsorship of indigenous arts and crafts. For Gamio arts and crafts, besides providing monetary support to the communities, were to be used as a basis from which to develop an original national art that would break with dominant European aesthetics. Their art was supposed to have carried remnants of a “prehispanic” era: “La relativa superioridad del arte indígena, se debe también a que en estos artistas aún sobrevive algo del espíritu estético-religioso que antes de la conquista presidía casi todas las actividades...” (Gamio, *Antología* xxix). In 1924, the Secretaría de Educación Pública created Casa del Estudiante Indígena, a boarding school. The point of the school, according to their documents, was to “anular la distancia evolutiva que separa a los indios de la época actual, transformando su mentalidad, tendencias y costumbres, para sumarlos a la vida civilizada moderna e incorporarlos íntegramente dentro de la comunidad social mexicana” (qtd. in Urías Horcasitas 51). In line with the liberalism of the Revolutionary government, Gamio asserted that the intellectual and cultural problems of indigenous people were not the result of racial inferiority, but of poverty and lack of exposure to modern European culture. Gamio advocated the training of indigenous teachers, who would return to, and teach in, their communities: “Unquestionably this teacher must be a native of those regions, tempered to the burning suns of the lime plains or the sandy deserts; ... He should be accustomed to eating the *tortilla* and chili of the sierra, ... and should know how to sit on his horse. Educated in his native region, such a man is, potentially, the modern apostle of the rural school ...” (“The Indian Basis” 147). Education will be a means by which to introduce “civilization:” “And by civilization I do not mean merely teaching the Indian how to read. I mean teaching him that he walks in a rich soil and that there is a world around him. Throughout four hundred years he has stagnated miserably and has not even known it” (“The Indian Basis” 154). Gamio thus saw education as the means by which to ‘awaken’ the dormant potential of the Indian.

Gamio might have gained a reputation of being a defender of indigenous people for his view that the federal government must change their treatment of the northern Yaqui, who had taken up arms to protect their territories. He suggested that their stolen

¹⁸ See chapter three of this dissertation for a discussion of Molina’s work.

land must be returned and protected: "... esos hombres exigen con toda justicia, desde los días de Cortés y de Montejó hasta la fecha, que se les permita existir tranquilamente en el suelo en que hace tantas centurias alientan. ... Había y hay tierra para todos" (*Forjando* 171). This marks an important change from the Porfirian era. Gamio, in the case of the Yaqui, recognized the legitimate rebellion of indigenous groups fighting for their self-determination: "que les dejen vivir su vida propia en las comarcas que legítimamente les pertenecen" (172). These statements might have reflected the view that the Yaqui, because of their long history of rebellion, were inevitably forever outside of the nation.

Yet, Gamio's *indigenismo* did not celebrate an autonomous indigenous presence within the nation, but sought to erase it. Gamio diagnosed indigenous culture as a sickness and prescribed as its medicine European based education administered with the scientific tools of anthropology. Thus the study of indigenous languages was necessary, not to preserve them, but to access the "Indian's soul" so as to better transform it. In time these languages would disappear, and Mexico would be a step closer to being a true nation ("*The Indian Basis*," 126). In *Mexico Profundo* (1987), Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla would later provide an incisive critique of Gamio and post-revolution *indigenismo*:

The definition of what is 'good' and 'bad' in Indian cultures, what is useful and what should be discarded, was not, of course, a matter in which the opinion of the Indians themselves counted. It was a matter, like all *indigenista* policy, in which only the non-Indians, the 'nationals,' those who exercised cultural control in the country and hoped to extend it further, had a voice. (117)

Brading concurs with Bonfil Batalla, noting that "[t]he ultimate and paradoxical aim of official *indigenismo* in Mexico was thus to liberate the country from the dead-weight of its native past, or, to put the case more clearly, finally to destroy the native culture which had emerged during the colonial period" ("Manuel Gamio" 88).

Vasconcelos' *La raza cósmica* and *Indología*

José Vasconcelos is the most well known proponent of *mestizofilia*. His "gospel of mestizaje" was developed in his philosophical essay *La Raza Cósmica* (1925), and his book *Indología* (1926). These works share with Andrés Molina Enríquez and other earlier proponents of mestizaje an evolutionary and developmentalist view of racial mixing, however, Vasconcelos departed from Molina in that he was somewhat critical of social Darwinism and Spencerian evolutionism. And as I will argue, Vasconcelos ultimately espoused a deep racism against indigenous people, and although critical of white supremacy, his work ended up upholding it.

Vasconcelos' *mestizofilia* consisted of a *mélange* of conflicting theories, including: esoteric or occultist thought (i.e. references to alchemy and Atlantis); Christian mysticism, and a Mendelian view of hybridity and heredity. In addition, Vasconcelos' formulation of mestizaje was colored by a critique of United States' imperialism and by his beliefs that there was an ongoing confrontation between the "Latin civilization" and that of the "Anglo-Saxon." Beyond creating a homogenous mestizo nation, Vasconcelos argued that the continual mixing of the world's people would culminate in the creation of a new and final "cosmic race": "De la mezcla armoniosa no saldrá sin duda el super hombre nietzschiano, el selecto de Darwin, de maxilares de tigre que devora a sus afines.

Lo que puede salir es el Totinem (de latín *totus*=todo; *inem*=hombre), el hombre todo, el hombre síntesis, el prototipo y tipo final de la especie” (*Indología* 93).¹⁹

As my following discussion of *La raza cósmica* (1925) and *Indología* (1926) will make clear, although Vasconcelos was critical of social Darwinism and Herbert Spencer’s theories of evolution, he nevertheless shared with them certain key tenets, such as a belief in eugenic selection (although one based on Eurocentric notions of beauty), a belief in racial and cultural hierarchy, the assumption that homogeneity is necessary for civilization, and that history follows a linear progression towards greater perfection. There is in Vasconcelos a parallel and contradictory discussion of race; as Juan Carlos Grijalva has pointed out, there is in Vasconcelos’ work a dual and contradictory discourses of mestizaje: “por un lado, su discurso afirma una *integración nacionalista* y síntesis utópica feliz de las diferencias raciales y culturales; por otro lado, sugiere una degradación o ansiedad racial encubierta hacia la especificidad de los pueblos indígenas existentes” (341).²⁰ This anxiety stemmed from Vasconcelos’ core belief in a racial hierarchy in which indigenous and African people were at the bottom, as well as from his inability to completely break with European scientific racism of the time.

Response to Social Darwinism

Vasconcelos’ work must be read as a reaction to European racism and biological determinism, and in particular, to the social Darwinism articulated by Herbert Spencer who argued for the superiority of whites over people of color and racially mixed people. Social Darwinism blamed Latin America’s social problems on racial heterogeneity, and especially, on the existence of indigenous and African people whom European thinkers considered incapable of self-government and rationality. The fatalism of European biological determinism created among Latin American politicians and intellectuals an existential crisis that forced them to confront their national reality. For Vasconcelos this crisis presented a choice:

or we renounced life itself, so that we could continue being evolutionists, Darwinians who contemplate, hypnotized beforehand, their own extermination, or we shook off the witchcraft of those bitter doctrines, that for us were like a mortal narcotic destined to suffocate the smallest resistance of our sacrificed personality. (*Indología* 133, my translation)

Since collective suicide was not an option, and the massive elimination of indigenous and African people was not feasible, Vasconcelos’ writing sought to formulate a way out this biological straightjacket with the alternative of a theory of mestizo superiority.

Furthermore, Vasconcelos was also concerned with creating a common denominator that

¹⁹ “Of the harmonious mixture there will not come out without doubt the Nietzschean super man, [or] the selected of Darwin, with tiger’s maxillaries that devours his likes. What can come out is the Totinem (from the Latin *totus*=everything; *inem*=man), the everything man, the man of synthesis, the prototype and final type of the specie” (my translation).

²⁰ “on the one hand, his discourse affirms a *nationalist integration* and a happy utopian synthesis of racial and cultural differences; on the other hand, it suggests a racial degradation or anxiety with respect to the specificity of existing indigenous peoples” (my translation).

would unite Mexico and other Latin American nations; an unity that would ultimately protect the nation against possible U.S. imperial wars.

Since the late part of the 19th century, European scientists had begun to link the idea of human evolution with social progress. The work of Arthur de Gobineau, Gustave Le Bon, and Herbert Spencer, for example, argued that racial mixing produced an inferior race and therefore, an inferior and chaotic society.²¹ In her study of “primitivism” and mestizaje in Latin American, Kelley R. Swarthout emphasizes the deep influence that Gobineau and other social Darwinists had on Latin American thinkers, many of who had been educated in Europe (10). In the face of the prevalence of scientific racism, Vasconcelos’ *mestizofilia* was well received in Latin America. In his prologue to *Indología*, Vasconcelos comments: “I do not exaggerate when I say that in certain places where there is an abundance of people of color I was received as a sort of Messiah” (my translation).²² Latin American intellectuals, like Vasconcelos and Gamio, felt caught between their own attempt to measure up to the scientific European standards, and the dominant European evolutionary thought of their time.

Vasconcelos mounted an elaborate critique of social Darwinism and Spencer’s evolutionary theory. First, he faulted social Darwinism of reducing the workings of human evolution to the “zoological” and for assuming that humans were bound to the same natural laws of other species. Vasconcelos argued that these thinkers did not want to recognize that human evolution followed a greater divine plan that transcended physical laws. As a counter example, Vasconcelos offered the presence of Christianity in the Americas and suggested that God was behind the English and Spanish colonization. Secondly, Vasconcelos rejected social Darwinism as a veiled attempt by the dominant Anglo-Saxon race to justify their domination, and not the result of rigid scientific work. Their “natural selection” was no other than an “implicit argument in all imperialism [that] justifies the vandalism of those who carry on the conquest” (*Indología* 70). Vasconcelos argued that if we looked at history, dominant races had always attempted to justify their domination through appeals to some greater truth. Anglo-Saxon dominance could be better understood, he argued, as the outcome of the natural rhythms of humanity, in which a race evolves and then decays as its spiritual energy diminishes. Vasconcelos believed that each race had a sort of spiritual energy curve, one that after achieving its peak lost momentum and slowed down. The only thing that could extend this spiritual force was mixing with other races.²³ In both *La raza cósmica* and *Indología*, Vasconcelos pointed to the Egyptian, Greek, and the Roman empires as proof that racial mixing resulted in social progress and great cultural advancement. At the same time, he noted that in the Americas, the outcomes of hybridity had been slow because the races mixing were too different: “It so happens that the mixture of quite dissimilar elements takes a long time to mold. Among us, due to the exclusion of Spaniards decreed after

²¹ For a discussion of European scientific racism, see Mike Hawkins’ *Social Darwinism in European and American thought 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (1997).

²² *Indología*, p. XLIV. As I will discuss later in this paper, Vasconcelos saw himself as a sort of prophet, bringing to Latin Americans the “gospel of mestizaje.”

²³ Vasconcelos here seems to coincide with Andrés Molina Enríquez who saw mestizaje as sort of evolutionary engine.

Independence, the mixing of the races was interrupted before the racial type was completely finished” (*La raza* 5).

As an alternative to biological determinism, Vasconcelos pointed to a “progressive mobility of the spirit” that transcended material laws, since the “spirit does not obey the fatality of the environment” (*Indología* 71). Ultimately, it was this spiritual force that guided human progress and evolution. With strong biblical references Vasconcelos stated:

Se desdeña [el Darwinismo del] factor más importante de la potencialidad humana: el soplo que periódicamente agita a los pueblos y los lleva a cumplir sus destinos. Se reconoce que el más humilde barro es capaz de cobrar significaciones cuando un artista le imprime palpitación, y no se quiere ver que si la misma arcilla obedece, con mayor razón ha de hacerlo el elemento consciente que permea los pueblos, preciosa sustancia de la cual procede todo lo que ante nuestros ojos remeda esplendor.²⁴ (*Indología* 80)

Through the lens of Christian mysticism, Vasconcelos saw the hand of God shaping the mestizo race that will eventually make possible a paradise populated by a beautiful race of philosophers and artists.

Vasconcelos’ mestizaje was also a response to those who relied on phrenology²⁵ to claim that indigenous people were racially inferior. In the previous chapter I have already discussed how Francisco Pimentel relied on this pseudoscience to argue for the physical similarity of certain indigenous groups to whites. In this case, Vasconcelos critiqued the work of Wilson Grant, pointing out that European characteristics “by themselves do not imply any superiority” (*Indología* 102). While he agreed that in general Europeans were beautiful, he noted that this was a result of “living in better material conditions than other races, it’s evident that the imprint of this good treatment has to manifest on the exterior, the same way that it manifest in a fine race of horses” (*Indología* 103). To beautify the Latin American population Vasconcelos prescribed that everyone become a property owner: “La belleza y la propiedad, por lo menos la pequeña propiedad, van unidas; por eso nosotros, los condenados socialistas, queremos que todo el mundo sea propietario para que todo el mundo sea bello” (103).²⁶ This claims recalls

²⁴ “[Darwinism] disdains the most important factor of human potentiality: the breath that periodically agitates the nations and takes them to fulfill their destinies. It is recognized that the most humble of clay is capable of taking meanings when an artists imprints palpitation, and does not want to see that if that same clay obeys, with even greater reason the nations will obey the conscious element that permeates them, precious substance from which everything that before our eyes deserves splendor comes” (my translation).

²⁵ Phrenology was a pseudoscience that claimed that through cranial measurements it was possible to discern the mental capacity of individuals and races. See chapter three for a discussion of the influences of phrenology on Mexican intellectuals during the Porfiriato.

²⁶ “Beauty and property, at least small property, go together; that is why we, the condemned socialists, want for the whole world to be property owners so that the whole world can be beautiful” (my translation).

Andrés Molina Enríquez's earlier assertion that small private ownership was key to evolutionary progress.

Instead of adhering to the idea of "survival and predominance of the fittest," Vasconcelos argued, Latin America needed "the substitution of Mendelism for Darwinism in our biological philosophy as we might find more racial hope and more individual strength and faith in the Mendelian hypothesis of life" ("The Latin" 96). For Mendel, heredity was the result of the passing down of dominant genetic traits, and the leaving behind of recessive ones. Vasconcelos assumed that the white traits were dominant, and that the traits of indigenous people were recessive.²⁷ Against the prevalent social Darwinism: "The racial theory to which we ought to subscribe then is the theory that the differences among peoples depend more upon ability to do certain things to the exclusion of other things rather than to differences of degree in their total development" ("The Latin" 97). For Vasconcelos each race excelled in their own specific niche, for example, indigenous people were more artistic, while African people were more spiritual. Although race somewhat determined the individual, it did not necessarily determine their children, given the right racial mixture. In this way, the mixed race child left behind racial imperfections and retained the superior traits, the new race would be "the fruit of all previous ones and amelioration of everything past" (*La raza* 9).

In his work Vasconcelos consistently described European culture as a progressive redeeming force that "radically modified" indigenous "idiosyncrasy." The indigenous who had adopted European culture progressed, according to Vasconcelos, whereas those that still clung to their traditional culture "find themselves today as if they had lost all consciousness, since the sin of subtracting [themselves] from the general current of life does not go without punishment" (*Indología* 72). His usage of the word "sin" is not accidental. Vasconcelos *mestizofilia* must be understood as an attempt to complement his belief in biological determinism to his Christian view of progress, as when he states:

La ley del espíritu es el cambio perpetuo hacia adelante. Por eso los que se aíslan y apegan a una sola tradición reniegan de la ley del espíritu y como que recaen en la ley de las cosas físicas, y la esencia del hombre no tiene la calidad simple de la piedra, que permite hacer ensayos de eternidad: el hombre, cuando quiere perdurar en su estado, decae.²⁸ (*Indología* 72)

Beyond the physical laws that ruled objects and the animal species, Vasconcelos believed, was the divine law that imposed its will upon humanity, and forced it to move forward according to a higher plan. To go against this stronger spiritual law, was to become an object without consciousness; without humanity. Vasconcelos was perhaps suggesting that for indigenous people who retained their culture the theories of social

²⁷ In *México a través de los siglos* (1884), Vicente Riva Palacio had also argued that Indian traits disappeared when they mixed with Europeans, but he also believed that African traits were dominant in mixed race children. See chapter three for a discussion of Riva Palacio's work.

²⁸ "The law of the spirit is the perpetual change forward. That is why those that isolate themselves and stick to only one tradition deny the law of the spirit and it is like they fall into law of physical things, and the essence of man does not have the quality of the simple stone, which allows it to make rehearsals of eternity: when man wants to remain in his state, decays" (my translation).

Darwinism and Spencer did apply, as evident in their “decay.” But he did not argue that the same happened to Europeans who retain their culture, however, suggesting that their culture was already of the future.

Vasconcelos was convinced, at least in his early work, that there was a greater divine plan that guided human evolution and progress. Latin America was “El continente donde manda el corazón encendido. ¡La Zarza ardiente de la sabiduría divina!” (*Indología* 138).²⁹ Vasconcelos was obviously alluding to the Catholic concept of the Sacred Heart, as well as to the biblical “burning bush” where God is said to have commanded Moses to lead Israelites out of Egypt. Vasconcelos often presented himself as a sort of Moses or Quetzalcoatl³⁰ figure, bringing to the Americas “the gospel of the mestizo.” This destiny was manifested³¹ through divine laws, which according to Vasconcelos, the sciences were just beginning to discern. He adhered, like others of his time, to a linear progressive conception of history similar to Hegel or Marx, who believed that History coursed on a linear path to perfection, and that each human period carried within the contradictions that would bring about the following stage. Vasconcelos asked that we looked for the hidden “plan in History,” which has a “direction, a rhythm, and a purpose” (*La raza* 8). He believed that God had given “Iberoamerica” a “historical mission”: “The so-called Latin peoples, because they have been more faithful to their divine mission in America, are the ones called upon to consummate this mission. Such fidelity to the occult design is the guarantee of our triumph” (*La raza* 8). Since Vasconcelos believed this to be God’s plan, all of the technology and military might of the United States and Europe would not prevent mestizos’ inevitable destiny.

Vasconcelos made clear that the concept of “Indología” should not be confused with *indigenismo*. *Indología* did not “pretend ... to harbor under such name any intention of predominant favor to the autochthonous tradition of America or to the indigenous race of the continent ...” (*Indología* 9). Instead, “Indología” referred to the philosophy or system of thought surrounding mestizaje, including the destiny of the “raza iberoamericana.” *Indología* analyzed the “prophetic vision of the discovery of the New World” (7), the same that presumably directed Christopher Columbus to the Americas, and that was based on the “spherical” vision and unity of the world:

Indología in the sense of science of the Indies, science of the Universe, not of the old Indies or the modern Indies, nor of the geographical Indies, but of the Indies in the sense of Columbian dream of roundness of the earth, of the unity of the specie and of the concert of the cultures. (10, my translation)

According to Vasconcelos, although it might be seen as a mistake that Columbus called the native people “Indians,” he was in fact unwittingly foretelling (as in premonition) the coming of a “new era of civilization,” made up of a new race and culture based on

²⁹ “The continent where the burning heart rules. The burning bramble of divine knowledge!” (my translation).

³⁰ Under the direction of Vasconcelos the building for the Secretaría Federal de Educación Pública, included a panel with the figure of Quetzalcoatl, who he called “the first educator of this world’s zone” (*Discursos* 39). For an earlier association of Quetzalcoatl as Saint Thomas, a Christian prophet, see chapter three.

³¹ My comparison to United State’s notions of “manifest destiny” is intentional.

universal principles: “Un continente más vasto que la India milenaria y mejor adaptado que ella para ser campo de la civilización universal que ha concebido y anhelado todas las épocas” (8).³² Latin America was thus humanity’s last opportunity to create an utopian world.

Vasconcelos’ View of Indigenous People

For Vasconcelos the “Indian” was at the time of Spanish colonization in a state of savagery and cultural decay. He believed that the Indian had once shared the greatness of the mythical Atlantis, but lost it when that civilization declined.³³ It had gotten another opportunity to rise as a civilization under the guidance of Quetzalcoatl, who Vasconcelos called the first great teacher of the Americas. He believed that Quetzalcoatl abandoned the indigenous people when they let themselves be manipulated by evil Huitzilopochtli. Therefore, colonization was a necessary intervention to restore good in the Americas: “The races of America have been left, then, as if asleep, and this marks the importance of the arrival of the Spanish” (*Indología* 73). For Vasconcelos Indigenous people, by themselves, were incapable of development and democracy since they were caught in an evolutionary and developmentalist slumber and could not wake up on their own.³⁴ Although Vasconcelos at times acknowledged that indigenous peoples’ were economically disadvantaged, and even though he claimed to be a socialist, he was not able to recognize the structural problems that would make evident the connection between class exploitation, land dispossession, and institutional discrimination on the one hand, and indigenous societal problems on the other. Poverty ended up being indigenous peoples’ fault, a result of their spiritual lethargy and inability to insert themselves into the current of mestizo progress.

Those indigenous people who retained their native language, according to Vasconcelos, were impeding evolutionary progress and thus committing a “sin” punishable by cultural and physical “decay.” Even with this stubborn retention, those languages were doomed to “slowly disappear and will disappear completely because the age in which we live in tends towards simplification...” (*Indología* 97). To impose the Spanish language Vasconcelos would rely on compulsory primary education to avoid “the confusion of Babel that reins in poor Europe ...” (101).

For Vasconcelos, colonization was then a necessary divine intervention: “The truth is that that holy war marks the end of the indigenous race, that will never be again

³² “A continent more vast than ancient India and better adapted than her to be the land of the universal civilization that all epochs have conceived and longed for” (my translation).

³³ As evident in *La Raza Cósmica*, Vasconcelos was deeply influenced by esoteric occultist thought, including Theosophy. In his autobiographical book, *Ulises criollo* (2006 [1935]), Vasconcelos notes that during one of his stays in New York (1917) he ran across these writings at a local library: “Allí empecé las lecturas indostánicas de Max Müller y Oldenberg, sin omitir el caos teosófico de la Blavatzky y la Bessant. La confusión de estas últimas me dio la idea de tomar notas que más tarde se convirtieron en mi libro *Estudios indostánicos* [1920], destinado a combatir falsificaciones” (291 – 292).

³⁴ Compare to Manuel Gamio’s earlier assertion: “No despertarás espontáneamente. Será menester que corazones amigos laboren por tu redención” (*Forjando Patria* 22).

what it was ...” (*Indología* 73). The Spanish “were able to replace a backward civilization like was the indigenous by a rising civilization, like theirs at the time of the discoveries. For an ideal enterprise of this type we can say that it is legitimate to undertake a conquest” (*Indología* 88, my translation). The key word here is “replace,” whereas indigenous bodies might be included in the “new” civilization, their culture would not. In contrast to Andrés Molina Enriquez, who saw the mestizo as a modified Indian, for Vasconcelos the mestizo was a modified Spaniard. And since colonization was a “holy war,” there was no need for structural change that will return land and political power to living indigenous people.

Vasconcelos divided indigenous people into two general categories: primitive and evolved. The “primitive” included those that “crossed the Bering Stretch,” like the “azteca mongoloide” and the “American savages” which included those of Arizona and New Mexico. The biologically evolved, although still culturally stagnant, included those that “had to do with Atlantis, according to those who contemplate Palenque and Chichen Itza and Uxmal” (69). In the same text Vasconcelos at first seems to contradict himself when he states that the indigenous people “constitute one race.” However, a close look makes clear that what he was really saying was that although all living indigenous people might share an ancestry with those first people that migrated from Asia, there are also those who share an ancestry with the mythical Atlanteans. Vasconcelos based his argument on Alfred Wegener’s theory of “continental drift,” which claimed that the continents were once united. Vasconcelos thus believed that humans already existed at the time the continents began to divide. Atlantis eventually sank, but its population left descendants in South America, from whom Vasconcelos believes the ancient Mayans and Toltecs originated.

But there is no doubt that a great number of these Montezuma Indians had in their veins the same blood of the forgotten monuments... in the same manner we can affirm that, although the natives of Yucatan and Guatemala had forgotten all about the history of the builders of the Maya Quiché palaces, they still have in them the soul of the ancient architects. (“The Latin” 77)

This valuable essence persisted in the soul of the mestizo, who would be contributing to the creation of the future cosmic race; even though the Aztecs and their descendants are “totally unworthy of the ancient and superior culture” (*La raza* 9).

In *Indología*, besides casting the conquest as divine intervention, Vasconcelos explained that the Spanish colonizers were driven by a higher impulse to seek the beauty of the natural landscape. Vasconcelos argued that this drive to see the landscape, and not greed, was the real reason behind colonization: “el apetito que los empujaba era el apetito de la contemplación, el encanto y el esplendor de los paisajes más hermosos de la tierra” (121). Vasconcelos here might be attempting to counteract the Black legend³⁵ through romantic representations of conquistadors; in his account he willingly omits mass murder, rape and land theft, enveloping the conquest in a noble pursuit of “contemplation,” a “cult of the scenery, as the most pure way of divine manifestation” (*Indología* 121).

³⁵ The “black legend” refers to an overtly negative portrayal of Spanish colonization as a ruthless and sanguinary pursuit of wealth.

Furthermore, Vasconcelos argued that the land possessed a sort of spiritual inheritance of the Atlanteans, one that could be acquired through contact with the environment: “No importa que no se tenga la sangre azteca... el que nace en el altiplano de Anahuac acaba por sentirse un poco azteca, a pesar de que no quedan casi las huellas físicas de la primitiva civilización” (113). This suggested that mestizaje might not even require the actual intermixing with indigenous people, as the Spanish acquired their essence through a sort of naturally derived spiritual osmosis. This in contrast to his claim that indigenous people who retained their culture were devoid of consciousness, “empty,” yet he saw the land as filled with spiritual vibrancy:

Por el hecho es que espiritualmente nuestra tierra no está vacía. El pensamiento remoto de las naciones que en ella vivieron flota en el viento, palpita en las selvas, fulgura en los ocasos magníficos del trópico, ocasos esplendentes de una rica y misteriosa eternidad.³⁶ (118)

For Vasconcelos there remained a type of spiritual manna that both criollo and mestizo could feed on through their contemplation of the natural landscape. Vasconcelos was thus willing to make illogical statements claim that Europeans could connect with Atlanteans through the environment, and thus bypassing a need to commune with surviving indigenous people themselves. This paralleled the state’s usage of archeological projects, such as the reconstruction of Teotihuacan and the expansion of the National Museum, to invent glorious national origins. The message here was clear, dead Indians had more to contribute to the nation than live ones.

In his lectures given at the University of Chicago in 1926, published the same year under the title “The Latin American Basis of Mexican Civilization,” Vasconcelos worked hard at re-framing Spanish colonization as a democratizing mission. After categorizing indigenous forms of government as an “Oriental type of despotism,” he stated:

So it is evident that the clash between the Indian and the Spaniard in the days of Cortes and Pizarro was a clash between the democracy of the time—one of the most genuine democracies of Europe—and despotism—one of the crudest despotisms of history, the despotism of Montezuma and the Inca. (“The Latin” 47)

If we take into account that this lecture was given to a United States audience, this rewriting of history can be read as an attempt to offer a modern imperialist justification to the Spanish conquest. Vasconcelos went on to argue that the King of Spain later corrupted this democracy, and that this made Independence necessary as a way to restore it. Therefore, Mexican Independence was necessary, not to break with Spain or its culture, but to end the despotism of the King. Vasconcelos had no qualms in arguing that Independence was not about the decolonization of indigenous people, as he had previously stated in *Indología*:

Ni podía haber sido un movimiento de liberación del indio, sencillamente porque el indio ya no existía; no existió quizás nunca como entidad

³⁶ “Because of the fact that our land is not spiritually empty. The distant thought of the nations that once lived in her float on the wind, pulses in the jungles, shines in the resplendent sunsets with a rich and mysterious eternity” (my translation).

nacional y ya no existía espiritualmente, puesto que todo lo que sabe, todo lo que piensa, todo lo que hoy es, procede de la invasión europea.³⁷ (77)

Vasconcelos refused to acknowledge the indigenous presence, even though during his time culturally-identified indigenous people accounted for at least 16 percent of the population.³⁸ Vasconcelos' *mestizofilia* was based on his view of European cultural supremacy, and on a nationalism that simultaneously consumed the indigenous past while proposing their ontological disappearance, "el indio ya no existía."

As a self-described *criollo*, Vasconcelos was a great admirer of Hernán Cortés. For example, in 1923 he gave a speech in Brazil presenting a statue of Cuauhtémoc on behalf of the Mexican government. Vasconcelos used the opportunity to shower praises, not on the indigenous ruler, but on Cortés who he considered:

el más grande de todos los conquistadores... que vencía con la espada y convencia con la palabra, después de su audacia gloriosa de quemar barcos para encadenar victorias, avanzaba con grandes ejércitos... Los caciques indígenas que pretendían resitirle, caen aniquilados por el fuego sagrado de armamentos inauditos, que servían a los conquistadores como si fuesen hijos del mismo dios Sol que ilumina la tierra. (*Discursos* 93)

Notice the discursive displacement of indigenous history, for although the ceremony was meant to honor Cuauhtémoc, Vasconcelos chose to emphasize Cortés.

In 1920 Vasconcelos was appointed chancellor of Mexico's National University, and in 1921, Secretary of Education. As the head of Mexico's public education, Vasconcelos refused to teach indigenous languages or implement bilingual education. He reasoned that through forced assimilation indigenous people would be pushed into "the stream of universal culture." In contrast to social Darwinists of the time, Vasconcelian education did not privilege the sciences, but emphasized philosophy and the European classics. He also advocated strengthening the influence of the Catholic religion since the Church, as he had once stated, had "made the American Indians advance, in a few centuries, from cannibalism to a relative degree of civilization."³⁹ In his acceptance speech as head of Mexico's National University in 1920, he invited educators to emulate the Spanish colonization: "Seamos los iniciadores de un entusiasmo cultural semejante al fervor que ayer ponía nuestra raza [read: Spanish] en las empresas de la religión y la conquista" (*Discursos* 11). As head of a government's publishing house he printed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as the work of Plato and other European classics for mass distribution. In contrast to his contemporary Manuel Gamio, who did favor bilingual education and the preservation of some indigenous cultural elements, Vasconcelos had no hope or desire for the incorporation of the indigenous into Mexico *as* indigenous:

³⁷ "It could not have been a movement for the liberation of the Indian, simply because the Indian no longer existed; it probably never existed as a national entity and it did not exist spiritually, for everything that he knows, everything that he thinks, everything that he is today, comes from the European invasion" (my translation).

³⁸ For a discussion of Mexico's indigenous population, and the Mexican census of 1930 and 1940, see Valdés y Teresa Menéndez 17.

³⁹ From the 1948 "Prologue" to *La raza cósmica*. Vasconcelos coined UNAM's motto: "por mi raza hablará el espíritu." He later commented that he meant the Holy Spirit (Manzanos "El Vasconcelismo"). See also Marilyn Grace Miller, p. 28.

Say what one may, the red men, the illustrious Atlanteans from whom Indians derive, went to sleep millions of years ago, never to awaken... No race returns... The Indian has no other door to the future but the door of modern culture, nor any other road but the road already cleared by Latin civilization. (*La raza* 16)

And since for Vasconcelos violent genocide of native people was not an option, the only paths available for them was racial mixing and Eurocentric education: “No queda, pues, sino mestizaje o tutelaje” (*Indología* 92).

In *Indología* Vasconcelos made a curious reference of Quetzalcoatl as the founder of Latin American education and as a representative of European culture. For Vasconcelos the “first reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl” was Argentinean president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento whose program consisted of “the Europeanization of the continent and the diffusion of primary education” (*Indología* 148).⁴⁰ One should remember that the figure of Quetzalcoatl had previously been appropriated in the late seventeenth century by Carlos Singüenza y Gongora as an early manifestation of creole nationalism, and later by Fray Teresa de Mier to justify the wars of Independence with the claim that Quetzalcoatl had been Saint Thomas and brought Christianity before the Spanish. While for these thinkers Quetzalcoatl represented good and civilization, Huitzilopochtli, “el Dios sanguinario,” represented evil.

Vasconcelos’ “Aesthetic Eugenics”

Although Vasconcelos repudiated eugenics and social Darwinism because of their view of mixed race people, he nevertheless advocated for a “eugenics of aesthetics” guided, not by the principal of “survival of the fittest,” but by survival and selection of the most beautiful:

The laws of emotion, beauty, and happiness will determine the selection of a mate with infinitely superior results than that of eugenics grounded on scientific reason, which never sees beyond the less important portion of the love act. Above scientific eugenics, the mysterious eugenics of aesthetic taste will prevail. Where enlightened passion rules, no correctives are necessary. The very ugly will not procreate, they will have no desire to procreate. (*La raza* 30)

Vasconcelos argued that education would convince the “ugly types” of each races of their inferiority, and they would freely choose to reproduce. Sexual intercourse would then be guided by the belief that procreation needed to serve the higher purpose of “social improvement.” In “*Assimilating The Primitive: Parallel Dialogues on Racial Miscegenation in Revolutionary Mexico*,” Kelley R. Swarthout discusses the distinction between Vasconcelos’ view of selection and that of social Darwinism:

But unlike the Social Darwinists, who spoke of the racial superiority of Whites in biological terms, Vasconcelos perceived superiority in the New World as an *aesthetic* notion constructed upon the semantic relationship between whiteness and enlightenment. Vasconcelos’s enlightened fifth race would freely choose to become whiter because whiteness was a more aesthetically pleasing trait than darkness. (109)

⁴⁰ In his novel, *Facundo o Civilización y Barbarie* (1845) Sarmiento presents the history of Latin America as a confrontation between civilization and barbarism.

Vasconcelos' opposed placing legal restrictions on marriages, instead, the Mexican population would be led to an enlightened marital choice guided "by the indecipherable, but distinctive, sign of beauty" (*Indología* 223, my translation). Although Vasconcelos at times seemed to defend indigenous people against white standards of beauty, as when he argued that such standards "may be only one of the consequences of the fact that the white race is predominant in the present era of history," ultimately he agreed that indigenous people were generally ugly ("The Latin" 38). He reasoned that their ugliness was a result of their poverty: "Where there is no comfort at all, the human body turns back to the beasts. Leisure and wealth develop beauty in any racial stock" ("The Latin" 39).⁴¹ This view, even while not strictly attributing ugliness to race, reveals Vasconcelos' conception of the limited role indigenous people would play in the creation of the "cosmic race." While Vasconcelos noted that society should not oppose the marriage between "a black Apollo with a blond Venus," since they would represent the most beautiful of each race, he also stated:

es repugnante mirar esas parejas de casados que salen a diario de los juzgados o los templos, feas en su proporción, más o menos del noventa por ciento de los contrayentes. El mundo está así lleno de fealdad a causa de nuestros vicios, nuestros prejuicios y nuestra miseria.⁴² (*La raza* 71)

For Vasconcelos then, only about ten percent of all unions were worthy of reproduction. Since for him most mestizos and indigenous people were ugly, this meant that the cosmic race would be predominantly European. Vasconcelos' of mestizaje would lead to the disappearance of the inferior races, which he saw as unworthy of "perpetuation." In *La Raza Cómica*, he predicted that after "a few decades of aesthetic eugenics, the Black may disappear, together with the types that a free instinct of beauty may go on signaling as fundamentally recessive and undeserving, for that reason, of perpetuation" (32). In his seminal 1972 essay on Vasconcelos' mestizaje in the Chicana/o scholarly journal *Aztlán*, Nicandro Juárez correctly pointed out that mestizaje for Vasconcelos worked as a racial filter or diluter:

La raza cósmica, in the final analysis, did not really reflect a sincere desire to have the racial traits of all peoples blended together. It was rather a hope that those traits Vasconcelos considered inferior would be absorbed and lost in the sea of genes of the superior types. Vasconcelos suggested that according to Mendel's Law, the racial mestizaje would be cleansed of its inferior genes. The magic word was absorption: the short types would be absorbed by the taller types, the dark by the lighter-in short, inferior types by superior types. The Blacks, by such means, would also be redeemed, as he put it, ' . . . little by little, by voluntary extinction' (70).

Mestizaje thus filtered out the "ugliness" and "inferior" traits of the races, as it diluted the indigenous race in the white race (Juárez 70). The indigenous and African populations,

⁴¹ In *Indología* Vasconcelos reaffirmed this point when he stated: "La fealdad es comúnmente una consecuencia de la miseria" (92).

⁴² "it's repugnant to see those married couples that come out of the courthouses or temples daily, ugly in their proportion, more or less of ninety percent of the contractors [newlyweds]. The world is thus full of ugliness as a result of our vices, our prejudice and our misery" (my translation).

according to Vasconcelos, were doomed to disappear as they would freely choose to stop reproducing, since sexual intercourse is guided by an “eugenics aesthetic;” so the “ugly” would choose to not reproduce for the benefits of humanity. He wrote: “Perhaps the traits of the white race will predominate among the characteristics of the fifth race, but such a supremacy must be result of the free choice of personal taste, and not the fruit of violence or economic pressure” (*La raza* 25 – 26). Even though he did not advocate genocide against indigenous people, the logical conclusion of his philosophy meant their voluntary self-extirpation.

Vasconcelos believed that human history could be divided into three evolutionary stages: 1) the material age ruled by warfare, 2) the intellectual stage ruled by politics, and the future and final stage, 3) the spiritual or aesthetic stage ruled by love and beauty. The first stage, the material, was ruled by war. Humanity was currently in the second intellectual stage, ruled by rationality. According to this logic, humans had been steadily progressing towards greater freedom and towards social perfection. For Vasconcelos contemporary humans had different predecessors, however, these are not the *Homo sapiens* of evolutionary theory. Didier T. Jaén does an excellent job discussing the occult and esoteric references of *La raza cósmica*. He notes for example that Vasconcelos publicly acknowledged the influence of Theosophy with respect to the idea of “blacks” being descendants of Lemurians, which according to Theosophist through, was a race of hermaphrodites that disappeared millions of years ago.⁴³ Whereas indigenous people contributed to the “cosmic race” the dormant essence of Atlanteans, the African race would contribute the essence of the Lemurians:

All the races that are to provide their contribution are already there: The Nordic man, who is today the master of action but who had humble beginnings... the black man, as a reservoir of potentialities that began in the remote days of Lemuria; the Indian, who saw Atlantis perish but still keeps a quiet mystery in the conscience. (*La raza* 39)

Despite their present decay, argued Vasconcelos, the indigenous and African had a “reservoir of potentialities” left over from the Atlantean civilizations that “flourished millions of year ago.” This potential was not one that could redeem or uplift the Indian or African, since it could not be accessed by them: “There is no going back in History, for it is all transformation and novelty. No race returns” (16). The “deep sleep” of the Indian, who Vasconcelos compared to a deep and still well (cenote), could only be awakened through racial mixing, specifically by the contribution of the old Lemurian, the African:

This infinite quietude is stirred with the drop put in our blood by the Black, eager for sensual joy, intoxicated with dances and unbridled lust. There is also appears the Mongol, with the mystery of his slanted eyes that see everything according to a strange angle, and discover I know now what folds and newer dimensions. The clear mind of the White, that resembles his skin and his dreams, also intervenes. Judaic striae hidden within Castilian blood since the days of the cruel expulsion now reveal

⁴³ Among Vasconcelos esoteric references are those to the “Emerald Tablet” (48), Hermes Trismegistus (48), and the Egyptian “Book of the Dead” (63). For a discussion of these in Vasconcelos thought, see Jaén’s annotations in *La raza cósmica*, page 84 note 13.

themselves, along with Arabian melancholy, as a reminder of the sickly Muslim sexuality. (21–22)

True to the widespread “scientific” Eurocentric racism of his era, Vasconcelos saw people of color as overly determined by their bodies and biological impulses, and because of their perceived lack of intelligence, they were unable to “regulate the lower zoological instincts, which are contrary to a truly religious conception of life” (19–20).⁴⁴

Vasconcelos defined the Latin American mestizo as the racially mixed offspring of Spanish and indigenous people. In contrast to Andrés Molina Enríquez who in *Los grandes problemas nacionales* had defined the mestizo as a “modified Indian,”⁴⁵ for Vasconcelos the mestizo was a modified Spaniard. Vasconcelos agreed with his intellectual predecessors that biology determined the social characteristics and identity of an individual, as when he explained why the mestizo was disconnected from his/her indigenous community: “the half-breed cannot entirely go back to his parents because he is not exactly as any of his ancestors; and being unable to connect fully with the past, the mestizo is always directed toward the future—is a bridge to the future” (“The Latin” 83). Ethnic disidentification, or as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla properly calls it *de-indianization*, was thus the natural result of biology and not necessarily the result of racism and the unequal distribution of social power and status. Lacking from Vasconcelos’ account were indigenous people’s own views of racial mixing, or of mixed race indigenous people who lived in indigenous communities. Indeed, it is evident these voices are purposely silenced in the nationalist narrative.

As already noted, in Vasconcelos’ eyes most indigenous people and mestizos were ugly: “en general más bien es feo el promedio de la nueva raza. Fea es también la mayor parte de la raza indígena; pero esto no depende tanto de herencia como de las condiciones de trabajo en que vive el indio y el mestizo” (*Indología* 91).⁴⁶ However, for someone who saw beauty as divine selection, one wonders if Vasconcelos also saw poverty as divinely ordained. If the cosmic race was the result of the mixing of the most beautiful (“the best of all the *castas*”) when was it that the indigenous and poor mestizos would join in? Vasconcelos did not seem to care. He agreed with Molina and Justo Sierra when he stated: “The truth is then that whether we like it or not the mestizo is the dominant element of the Latin American continent” (“The Latin” 92).

Vasconcelos’ Ugly Face: Nazism

It is a known, but often hushed, fact that Vasconcelos was sympathetic to both Nazi Germany and the fascism of Spain. In 1940 he established and directed a pro-Nazi

⁴⁴ Vasconcelos also favored restricting Chinese immigration: “We recognize that it is not fair that people like the Chinese, who, under the saintly guidance of Confucian morality multiply like mice, should come to degrade the human condition precisely at the moment when we begin to understand that intelligence serves to refrain and regulate the lower zoological instincts, which are contrary to a truly religious conception of life” (19–20).

⁴⁵ For a discussion of Molina’s work see chapter three of this dissertation.

⁴⁶ “in general this new race is ugly on average. Ugly is also the majority of the indigenous race; but this is not so much the result of heredity as it is of the working conditions that the Indian and mestizo live” (my translation).

magazine, *El Timón*, funded by the German embassy in Mexico during World War II.⁴⁷ As Rosario Manzanos points out, “En 1940 –en plena segunda Guerra Mundial– Vasconcelos escribía en la revista pro-nazi *Timón*, presuntamente financiada por la Alemania de Hitler.” LIFE magazine ran a story in 1940, where they exposed the Nazi-Vasconcelos connection:

More or less open Nazi activities include radio broadcasts, pamphlets sent by mail or handed out in German stores, subsidization of propaganda in the Mexican press and particularly of a weekly magazine, *Timon*. ... Editor of *Timon* is José Vasconcelos, onetime Minister of Education, who mortally hates and fears the U.S. (“A Nazi Fifth Column” 51).

The article includes a picture of Vasconcelos with German Nazis Arthur Dietrich and William Hammerschmidt. Although colored by the propaganda of the time, *LIFE* was accurate in reporting Vasconcelos’ involvement. In *Timón* he praised the work of Hitler, here quoted at length:

Hitler, aunque dispone de un poder absoluto, se halla a mil lenguas del cesarismo. La fuerza no le viene a Hitler del cuartel, sino del libro que le inspiró su cacumen. El poder no se lo debe Hitler a las tropas, ni a los batallones, sino a sus propios discursos que le ganaron el poder en democrática competencia con todos los demás Jefes aspirantes a Jefes que desarrolló la Alemania de la posguerra. ... Lección provechosa la de Hitler, la de Mussolini, para todos los pueblos hispánicos de América que vivimos aplastados y sin embargo creemos contar con el porvenir. (“La inteligencia se impone” 152, 154).

Here Vasconcelos presented Hitler and Germany as a models to follow by Latin American nations, the rise of a “democratic” leader; presumably the embodiment of intelligent and divine leadership: “Dios quiere que siempre la cabeza triunfe sobre el brazo” (God always wants that the head triumphs over the arm) (152). The Mexican government closed *Timón* after only five months in publication, and expelled the German ambassador.

Towards the later part of his life, José Vasconcelos distanced himself more and more from the *mestizofilia* he so ardently espoused in the mid-1920s. For example, in *Ulises Criollo* (1935) he denied being anything other than pure Spanish. Vasconcelos described his parents: “Eugenésicamente, la pareja estaba bien concertada. Rubia y pálida, delicada, mi madre; y su marido, sanguíneo, robusto. Criollos puros los dos” (17). The description of his parents and their whiteness seems to suggest that he is the embodiment of the “eugenics of aesthetic” he discussed in his earlier work. In a 1944 speech, Vasconcelos goes as far as calling his conception of mestizaje an error, “quizás uno de mis yerros más notorios, fué la tesis que extraje de los confusos anhelos de mi adolescencia tropical; la tesis que afirmaba fe en nuestra raza mezclada y su futuro

⁴⁷ For a good discussion of *Timón* see Héctor Orestes Aguilar’s “Ese olvidado nazi mexicano de nombre José Vasconcelos,” (2007). For a reproduction of a number of *Timón* editorials and articles written by Vasconcelos, see Itzhak Bar-Lewaw’s *La revista “Timón” y José Vasconcelos* (1971).

potente...” (*Discursos* 210).⁴⁸ Then in a speech given to a mainly Mexican American audience in 1946 in San Antonio, Texas, to commemorate “El Día de la Raza,” Vasconcelos made clear that “la Raza” being celebrated was not the Indian or the mestizo, but the Spanish:

Para nosotros, sin embargo, no es éste únicamente el día de Colón, día del descubrimiento, sino el Día de la Raza; es decir, la fecha del homenaje a la raza española en cuyas glorias tenemos parte porque somos porción de la cultura hispánica... el genio de Colón es un accidente que se sumó a la tarea española, tarea de agrandar los límites del mundo, en lo material, con las exploraciones y las conquistas, y en lo espiritual, ganando las almas para el reino sin fronteras de Cristo Nuestro Señor.⁴⁹ (*Discursos* 180)

The “Day of *la raza*” was then about the celebration of the Spanish in the mestizo. The Spanish conquest was constructed as divine intervention. The celebration included the Indian, who through the assimilation of Spanish culture, had been adopted into Spanishness:

Bajo la acción civilizadora de los españoles se castellanizó el indio de un extremo a otro de América. Y desde entonces cada indio que habla castellano como su lenguaje nativo, es un hijo legítimo de la Raza Española... por eso mismo hay que proclamar anatema contra todos, todos esos intentos de divorciar al indio del español... (*Discursos* 180)

He then added that a separation of Spanish and Indian could only lead to a “new subjugation of the indigenous race,” since their inferior culture and language did not equipped them to live “a civilized life” and would thus make them vulnerable for the colonization by another European power (182). Through a discursive whitening of Latin America, Vasconcelos further rejected any identification with the indigenous :

Escuchad bien la palabra, ¡oh equivocados de la versión bastarda y pochista que nos pretendió bautizar de “indoamericanos”! América Latina es la nuestra, porque los españoles y los portugueses eran latinos y lo son también los millones de italianos en la Argentina y el Perú y en otras secciones de América nos están ayudando a formar la patria ilustre y grande que han entrevisto nuestros videntes. (*Discursos* 185)

For Vasconcelos, Europe was now the only source of valid Latin American civilization, and he no longer defended the contributions of indigenous people and other people of color. By then he was not longer affiliated with the Mexican state, and his early

⁴⁸ Marilyn Grace Miller dates the speech to 1944. In her important book *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America*, she discusses that Vasconcelos would eventually have “a complete or nearly complete about-face in his view of mestizaje” (40).

⁴⁹ “For us, however, this is not only the day of Columbus, day of discovery, but the Day of the Race; that is, the date [we pay] homage to the Spanish race in which we also share glories because we are a part of the Hispanic culture... the genius of Columbus was an accident that was added to the Spanish task, the task of widening the limits of the world, in regards to the material, with the explorations and conquests, and in regards to the spiritual, winning souls for the kingdom without borders of Our Lord Christ” (my translation).

nationalist fervor had subsided. By the 1940s, it was clear that Vasconcelos had fully renounced the *mestizofilia* he had ardently espoused in the 1920s.

Conclusion: Continuities and Ruptures

Vasconcelos' appeal in the United States during the Chicano Movement had a lot to do with the selective appropriation of his critique of white supremacy and U.S. imperialism, as well as with his ambiguous exaltation of racial mixing at a time when racism and social Darwinism dominated mainstream views of people of color. From this point of view, it is not entirely difficult to see why even today Vasconcelos is heralded as an advocate of multiculturalism. This selective appropriation of Vasconcelos' *mestizofilia* (perhaps an all too willing misreading), was misinterpreted as an anti-racist doctrine. Statements such as: "There is nothing left for us to do, but to follow the Spanish tradition of eliminating the prejudice of color, the prejudice of race in all of our social procedures," or "[t]he duty of any great culture is, then, to raise human beings as a whole and to call races together so that they can all collaborate in the task of a truly material and spiritual civilization" ("The Latin" 89, 98) would prove extremely appealing to the historically excluded Chicano/a, who had limited knowledge of Vasconcelos work as a whole. Vasconcelos' commonly quoted acceptance speech as Rector of México's national university in 1920, is another example of this type of rhetoric:

Yo soy en estos instantes, más que un nuevo Rector que sucede a los anteriores, un delegado de la Revolución que no viene a buscar refugio para meditar en el ambiente tranquilo de las aulas, sino a invitaros a que salgáis con él a la lucha, a que compartáis con nosotros las responsabilidades y los esfuerzos. En estos momentos yo no vengo a trabajar por la Universidad, sino a perder a la Universidad que trabaje por el pueblo. (*Discursos* 9)

His call for a popular and revolutionary education in favor of the people resonated with Chicanos/as of the late 1960s who were struggling against the institutional racism of higher education. The message that "there can be no joy in a civilization where races are separated by hatred, prejudice, and misunderstanding" ("The Latin" 99) was and remains true, and Vasconcelos was right to call for racial inclusion and the undoing of racial boundaries (though he finally repudiated this thinking as youthful folly). But Vasconcelos was not, even in his early years, a proponent of equitable inclusion and multiculturalism. In this chapter I have tried to emphasize, in the strongest way possible, that Gamio's *indigenismo* and Vasconcelos' *mestizofilia* were racist and Eurocentric ideologies, a product of their time and heir to centuries of Eurocentric colonial thought in Mexico and Latin America.

Chicana/os of the 1960s and 70s were not in the same privileged social position as the Mexican elite who conceptualized *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo*, but rather a negatively racialized, and for the most part, working class population. Chicano mestizaje discourse necessarily departed from Mexico's official *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo*. To simply equate Chicano/a mestizaje and indigeneity discourse to that of Vasconcelos' or Gamio's is not only reductionist, but misses the important decolonial critiques of white supremacy and Eurocentrism elaborated by Chicana/o intellectuals. In contrast to Mexican intellectual elites, for Chicano/a activist intellectuals mestizaje became an opportunity to re-invent their identity as mixed race indigenous people, as well as to

create a culture and worldview to opposed the cultural sterility of U.S. capitalism and racism. This will be the focus of my next and final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

(An)Other Geography: Aztlán¹

As the organizing signifier of a guerrilla discourse of outnumbered and severely disempowered national subject(ed)s, Aztlán's invisibility as a constructed discursive space in the minds and actions of a socially and politically abject people has, ironically, been its advantage in a grossly unbalanced–unequal *and* thus seemingly insane–war of the Chicana/o subject and collectivity against the dominant geographic, political, economic, social, and cultural ordering of the United States.

– Laura E. Pérez, “*El desorden*, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics,” 21.

I would like to explain the meaning of Aztlán. Not the 1960s concept, nor something pre-Cuauhtemoc, but of what it means today [1998]. For me, I see it as a part of a spiritually liberating idea and I see the time has come or is fast approaching that Raza proclaim ourselves to be part of a sovereign spiritual nation.

– Roberto Rodriguez, *Codex Tamuanchan*, 95.

In *Libertad/Liberty* (1976), an etching by Chicana artist Ester Hernández, a female character is depicted chiseling into the U.S. Statue of Liberty, remaking the bottom half of the statue into a Mayan styled woman. The woman wears full indigenous regalia, plumed headdress, and is bare breasted. At the base of the now two-female statue is the word “Aztlán.” The etching was meant to coincide with the American Revolution Bicentennial celebrations of 1976. The piece suggests that Chicanas/os² are actively chiseling away the false promise of inclusion, while rewriting a new conception of liberty that includes them. Laura E. Pérez points out that Hernández's etching “interrogates the ideal of freedom which the statue symbolizes, but that is denied to oppressed ‘minority’ groups that have consequently been made to carve out nations, like Aztlán, within a nation” (“*El desorden*” 29).

Daniel Cooper Alarcón has proposed that we understand the idea of Aztlán as a palimpsest, “a site where a text has been erased (often incompletely) in order to

¹ The term is inspired by the Mayan Zapatista “otra geografía” (another geography) as proposed by the writings of Subcomandante Marcos: “Los rebeldes caminan la noche de la historia, sí, pero para llegar al mañana. Las sombras no los inhiben para hacer algo ahora y en el aquí de su geografía. Los rebeldes no tratan de enmendar la plana o rescribir la historia para que cambien las palabras y la repartición de la geografía, simplemente buscan un mapa nuevo donde haya espacio para todas las palabras. [...] Así, la paz no será sino un concierto abierto de palabras y muchas miradas en otra geografía...” (“Otra Geografía” 9).

² “Chicano/a” is a political and ideologically specific self-designation, as it has already been discussed in chapter one.

accommodate a new one” (xvi). Aztlán, when understood as a “multilayered textual construct” or palimpsest, allows us to recognize diverging and conflicting nationalist narratives that give it meaning (Cooper Alarcón 21). The Chicano/a construction of Aztlán is thus another layer added to a pre-existing palimpsest, one that draws from previous national discursive layers. Seen under this light, Ester Hernández’s etching represents the ongoing national discursive confrontations, and the bringing to light of previous erasures/impositions of geographical and discursive maps. Ester Hernández’s piece can be read as both uncovering a history of European colonization of indigenous people, while it adds a new nationalist narrative that claims the existence of the Chicano/a nation within the United States.

The Chicano/a movement of the 1960s and 70s was a conscious response to a long history of racism and discrimination in the United States against Mexican Americans, but its particular ontological and ideological configurations were also a critique of Mexico’s own history of racism and its official mestizaje ideology that coded indigenous people as inferior and mestizos as non-Indian.³ Thus, though quite varied ideologically, Chicano/a discourse on mestizaje and indigeneity should not be understood as an uncritical reproduction of dominant Mexican *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo* developed by the post-1910 revolutionary governments, but instead as collective, and sometimes deeply personal, explorations of mixed race ancestry that sought to recuperate, and in some cases, center the indigenous. Although the exploration of indigenous history and culture by Chicano/a nationalists was not new or radical in an of itself, the subversive pitting of Mexico’s nationalist narrative against the United States’ more exclusionary nationalism produced an opportunity to re-conceptualize the meaning of Chicano/a subjectivity as tied to indigenous ancestry and culture. From the fringes of these two dominant nationalist ideologies came a third perspective, a border or “forked tongue,”⁴ that overflowed the borders of Mexico’s and United States’ sanctioned “imagined communities.”⁵ Chicanos/as’ historical and practical context made their claims to indigeneity not only oppositional, but also decolonizing. For while it might have been in vogue for the Mexican elite to safely celebrate a mythologized Aztec past, for Chicanos/as to assert their indigenous ancestry and culture in a society still permeated by white supremacy placed them in an uphill battle against the institutionalized racism and exclusion of the United States.

In “Refiguring Aztlán” (1997), Rafael Pérez-Torres “trace[d] some of the historical, literary, and intellectual discourse on the meaning of Aztlán” (16). My purpose in this chapter is similar to that of Pérez-Torres, in that I also seek to provide, and update, a genealogy of the term and analyze some of the diverse discursive practices associated with Aztlán. But in this chapter I also aim to highlight a particular configuration of Aztlán that facilitates a heterogeneous indigenous identification, the recuperation of indigenous epistemologies for purposes of decolonization, and coalitions with other indigenous people also struggling for their liberation. I situate Aztlán, along with Gloria

³ See my discussion of *mestizofilia* in chapter three and four.

⁴ Here I am borrowing from Gloria Anzaldúa’s conception of language and identity. See *Borderlands/La Frontera*, chapter five “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.”

⁵ For a discussion of nations as “imagined communities” see Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (1991).

Anzaldúa's concept of the *borderlands*, as part of (*an*)*other geography* not subservient to the maps and borders of nation-states produced by Eurocentric and imperialist imaginaries. This *otra geografía* also includes, as Cherrie Moraga notes, "the factories where we work, the water our children drink, and the housing project where we live. For women, lesbians, and gay men, land is the physical mass called our bodies" ("Queer Aztlán" 173). Considering this Chicano/a intellectual genealogy of Aztlán, I ask: what would it mean to reconfigure Chicano/a indigeneity outside and against Mexico's *mestizofilia* and *indigenismo* ideologies? What have Chicana feminists and queer thinkers contributed to this project, what some have begun to term Xicanim@?⁶ And, what would it mean to take on Roberto Rodriguez's invitation, given as this chapter's epigraph, to see Chicanos/as as sovereign people?⁷

Old Aztlán

The Aztecs' own accounts, as depicted in the Boturini Codex and told in the *Crónica Mexicáyotl*,⁸ tell that the Aztecs had left Aztlán (translated as either "land of herons" or "land of whiteness") and wandered south until they came to what is now Mexico City sometime in the thirteenth century (Meyer, Sherman and Deeds 44). Their deity Huitzilopochtli (Hummingbird on the Left) told them to migrate south and to build their civilization wherever they found an eagle perched on a cactus devouring a serpent.⁹ The Spanish missionary Fray Diego Durán wrote about Aztlán in his *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de Tierra Firme* (1581), but located it near Florida (8). According to Durán, the Aztecs' remembered Aztlán as a type of paradise, where people did not age or tire, "sin tornarse viejos ni cansarse, ni tener de ninguna cosa necesidad" (219). Durán's *Historia de las Indias* describes Aztlán through a conversation Moctezuma had with his royal historian, Cuauhcoatl:

⁶ In *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (1994), Ana Castillo defines Xicanisma as "Chicana feminism," and notes that "as we redefine (not categorically reject) our roles within our families, communities at large, and white dominant society, our Xicanisma helps us to be self-confident and assertive regarding the pursuing of our needs and desires" (40). Since her essay, there has been a constant association of Xicana/o with both feminist and indigeneity in the work of Chicanas. The "@" is used to be inclusive of different genders, including those that fall outside the male-female binary.

⁷ Rodriguez's invitation parallels the Zapatistas' own call to see ourselves as already autonomous. In his essay, "Negri by Zapata: Constituent Power and the Limits of Autonomy," José Rabasa points out that [t]he call for autonomy includes not only indigenous peoples, but the right of any municipio, regardless of its ethnic composition and moreover the right of any sector of society, to constitute itself as autonomous" (117).

⁸ Written in 1609 by Don Hernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, mixed-race grandchild of Moctezuma. For a discussion of Tezozómoc see Michael Pina's "The Archaic, Historical and Mythicized Dimensions of Aztlán," in *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, pp. 14 – 48.

⁹ This is a well-known story for Mexicans, as this image of the eagle would be later painted at the center of the national flag. The nation's name, Mexico, is a reference to the Mexica and their city, Mexico-Tenochtitlan. See chapter three for a discussion of Mexican independence and early nationalism.

O mighty lord [Moctezuma], I, your unworthy servant, can answer you. Our forebears dwelt in that blissful, happy place called Aztlán, which means ‘Whiteness.’ In that place there is a great hill in the midst of the waters, and it is called Colhuacan because its summit is twisted; this is the Twisted Hill. On its slopes were caves or grottos where our fathers and grandfathers lived for many years. There they lived in leisure, when they were called Mexitin and Azteca. There they had at their disposal great flocks of ducks of different kinds, herons, waterfowl, and cranes. Our ancestors loved the song and melody of the little birds with red and yellow heads. They also possessed many kinds of larger beautiful fish. They had the freshness of groves of trees along the edge of the waters. They had springs surrounded by willows, evergreens and alders, all of them tall and comely. Our ancestors went about in canoes and made floating gardens upon which they sowed maize, chili, tomatoes, amaranth, beans and all kinds of seeds which we now eat and which were brought here from there.¹⁰ (qtd. in Leal 9)

Cuahcoatl described Aztlán as a land of plenty, a place where life was good and peaceful. After the Mexica (now also referred to as Aztecs) left Aztlán, the land had turned barren and filled with dangerous animals. Moctezuma then decided to gather sixty “charmners and enchanters” and send them in a magical expedition to the land of Aztlán to meet and offer tribute to the goddess *Coatlicue*, mother of Huitzilopochtli. According to Durán, these sorcerers turned themselves into animals (birds and felines) in order to travel both temporally and geographically to Aztlán (221). There, they were able to meet *Coatlicue* and tell her about the great wealth and power the Aztecs had accomplished thanks to her son Huitzilopochtli. It was a dangerous journey, and beasts ate many of the emissaries. This Aztec account of Aztlán is important for it shows that it was the Aztecs who first imbued Aztlán with a mythic utopian quality, a quality that would later inspire Chicanos/as to claim it as a mythical and “spiritual” homeland.¹¹

¹⁰ From Durán’s translated book, *The Aztecs*, (1964), p. 134. The Spanish version reads as follows: “Respondió *Cuahcoatl*: poderoso Señor [Moctezuma]: lo que yo, tu indigno siervo, sé de lo que me preguntas, es que nuestros padres moraron en aquel feliz y dichoso lugar que llamaron *Aztlan*, que quiere decir blancura: en este lugar ay un gran cerro, en medio del agua, que llamavan *Culhuacan*, porque tiene la punta algo retuerta hácia abaxo, y á esta causa se llama *Culhuacan*, que quiere decir ‘cerro tuerto.’ En este cerro auia unas bocas ó cuevas y concavidades donde avitaron nuestros padres y aguelos por muchos años: allí tuvieron mucho descanso, debaxo deste nombre *Mexitin* y *Azteca*: allí goçavan de mucha cantidad de patos de todo género, de garças, de cuervos marinos y gallinas de agua y de gallaretas; goçavan del canto y melodía de los paxaritos de caveças coloradas y amarillas, goçaron de muchas diferencia de hermosos y grandes pescados; goçaron de gran frescura de arboledas que avian por aquellas riberas, y de fuentes cercadas de sauces y de savinas, y de alisos grandes y hermosos; andavan en canoas y hacian camellones en que sembravan maiz, chile, tomates, uauhtli, frisoles y de todo género de semillas de las que comemos y acá truxeron...” (Durán 219 – 220).

¹¹ It should be noted that early Mexican nationalism did not conceive of Aztlán as a national origin, or as a lost homeland to be recuperated, as Chicanos/as would in the

In her book *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space*, Mary Pat Brady discusses one of the earliest recorded references to Aztlán by a Mexican national in the United States. The reference appeared in a speech made by Ignacio Bonilla in September 1878 to the Club Union on the 68th anniversary of Mexico's independence, and which was later printed in the Arizona newspaper *El Fronterizo* under the title "Los Aztecas:"

Las ruinas de las ciudades que edificaron en su tránsito, contemplamos aún en nuestros días. En este territorio de Arizona, en Nuevo México y en Sonora, tenemos muchísimas ruinas de las ciudades que muchos años ha florecieron bajo el gobierno de los antiguos Aztecas. Los habitantes que entonces habitaban estas regiones, eran enteramente salvajes, por consiguiente, no pueden ser los autores de los edificios que ni la fuerza de los años, ni las intemperies del tiempo, han podido destruir por completo. De esto se infiere que los Aztecas en su peregrinaciones las construyeron.¹² (qtd. in Brady 34)

Bonilla, a resident of Sonora, argued that Mexicans should be viewed as descendants of 'civilized' Indians, unlike the local Native American population, who descent from "savages." Ignacio Bonilla based his argument in a Eurocentric logic of development, one that coded the Aztecs as civilized because of their likeness to Europeans. Bonilla also seems to suggest that since Mexicans were also part Spanish, then Mexicans in the U.S. should be seen as equal to Euro-Americans and share in their whiteness. Bonilla, like other Mexican nationalists of his time, simultaneously appropriated a romanticized Aztec past while espousing racism against living indigenous people. Miguel Tinker Salas' *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border During the Porfiriato* (1997) notes that Ignacio Bonilla belonged to Arizona's first Masonic lodge, named Aztlán.¹³ This Masonic Aztlán chapter accepted members from both Arizona's and Sonora's elite, "Since no Masonic organization existed on the Sonoran side, the American group sought and obtained special permission to accept Mexicans as members

1960s and 70s. Instead, early Mexican nationalists like criollo Carlos María Bustamante conceived of the new nation as a continuation of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Aztlán did appeared as a reference in early Mexican history texts, for example, the first volume of *Mexico a través de los siglos* (1884) provided a detailed account of Aztlán. The specific function of Aztlán for Mexican nationalism is beyond the scope of this chapter, but one that I do hope to explore in future projects.

¹² "Even today we can gaze at the ruins of the cities that they built during their passage. In this territory of Arizona, in New Mexico and in Sonora, we have many ruins of the cities that flourished for many years under the government of the ancient Aztecs. The inhabitants living in these regions were complete savages and, as a consequence, they could not be the authors of the buildings that not even the force of the years nor bad weather have been able to destroy completely. From this we infer that the Aztecs constructed them during their long journey" (translated by Brady).

¹³ The Masonic Aztlán chapter, in Prescott, Arizona, was chartered in 1866 and is the oldest Masonic lodge in the state. See their official website: <http://www.aztlanlodge.org/>.

of their lodge” (158). Tinker Salas points out that Bonilla eventually became a high-ranking officer of the Aztlán chapter (158).

The Chicano Movement’s Aztlán

The Chicano/a Movement of the 1960s and 70s mobilized concepts of indigeneity to stake cultural and political claims against the State and challenge policies of forced-assimilation and political domination. While for Mexican elites mestizaje signaled a biological and temporal distancing from indigeneity, for self-identified Chicanos/as mestizaje presented an opportunity to re-think the significance of indigenous ancestry and to re-evaluate their indigenous-based culture. Given both Mexico’s and the United States’ history of colonization, genocide, and exclusion of indigenous and “Indian-looking” mixed race people by the white and white-identified mestizo population, Chicana/o identification with the still colonized indigenous should be understood as part of the decolonizing struggles against racism and social Darwinism that permeated both U.S. and Latin American societies.¹⁴ As Guillermo Lux and Maurilio E. Vigil’s 1979 essay, “Return to Aztlán: The Chicano Rediscovered His Indian Past,” pointed out:

The Mexican has been portrayed as the dirty Mexican, the greaser, the pot-bellied “bandido,” or the complacent, placid, fun loving quaint personality. The Indian, on the other hand, has been cast as savage, mean, and treacherous. As such, not only was the Mexican American impelled to shed his Mexicaness because of the stereotyped picture he was exposed to, but he has not been able even to begin to consider his Indian origins. (94)

Mexican Americans’ civil rights claims had often rested on the allegation that Mexican Americans were legally white, based on the fact that Article VIII of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had granted them federal citizenship. Nevertheless, the status of citizen did not prevent U.S. society from constructing Mexicans as a subordinate racial group and making them targets of Jim Crow-styled laws (Gross 341).

Chicano poet Alurista is generally credited with popularizing the concept of Aztlán when he wrote the preamble to *El Plan de Aztlán*, crafted at the foundational 1969 First National Youth Liberation Conference.¹⁵ *El Plan* made for a powerful manifesto that reflected an emergent and oppositional Chicano national consciousness. As Luis Leal noted in “In Search of Aztlán” (1981),

It is necessary to point out the fact that before March, 1969, the date of the Denver Conference, no one talked about Aztlán. In fact, the first time that it was mentioned in a Chicano document was in “El Plan Espiritual de

¹⁴ Chapter three discusses the influence of social Darwinism in Mexican thought. For a discussion of the influence of European racism on Latin American thinkers, see Nancy Leys Stepan’s *“The Hour of Eugenics”: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (1991).

¹⁵ The Native American Studies professor Jack Forbes claims in his book, *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán* (1973), that he is the first to have used the term Aztlán in reference to Chicanos in his 1962 historical essay “The Mexican Heritage of Aztlán (the Southwest) to 1821,” which he self-published in mimeograph form. He comments, “As far as is known, this was the first use of the term Aztlán to refer to the Chicano homeland” (17). I have not found any reference to this document in Chicano/a texts of the 1960s.

Aztlán,” which was presented in Denver at that time. Apparently, it owes its creation to the poet Alurista who already, during the Autumn of 1968, had spoken about Aztlán in a class for Chicanos held at San Diego State University. (11)

Alurista, the pen name of Alberto Baltazar Urista Heredia, was born in Mexico City on August 8, 1947. He migrated to southern California at the age of 13. When Alurista shared his poem at the conference, “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” the participants decided to adopt it as the preamble to the Chicano/a platform.¹⁶ The poem-preamble consists of three short, but powerful, paragraphs. Because of its importance to my discussion, below I reproduce the preamble in its entirety:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal “gringo” invasion of our territories, *we*, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the norther land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, *declare* that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny.

We are free and sovereign to determine those tasks which are justly called for by our house, our land, the sweat of our brows, and by our hearts. Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continents.

Brotherhood unites us, and love for our brothers makes us a people whose time has come and who struggles against the foreigner “gabacho” who exploits our riches and destroys our culture. With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are *Aztlán*.
*Por La Raza Todo. Fuera de La Raza nada.*¹⁷

El plan thus read as a bold and assertive declaration of independence from U.S. oppression and racism, albeit with ideological contradictions and in patriarchal language. Chicanos claimed the right to live in Aztlán, not because it was once part of Mexico, but because their ancestors once inhabited this land and because they were now the workers that produced the wealth. Central to the plan was the unification of the Chicano nation:

¹⁶ Although *El Plan de Aztlán* as a whole was collectively written, Alurista is generally credited with writing the preamble of the plan. Alfred Arteaga notes: “Aztlán is as old as Aztec mythology, but its contemporary use for Chicanos emerges from the cultural nationalist manifesto, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, written at the First Chicano National Conference in Denver in 1969 by the poet Alurista” (12).

¹⁷ As reproduced in *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, from *Documents of the Chicano Struggle*, Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1971. Common Chicano/a usage of the word “raza” suggests that it is better translated to mean “people” of Latin American descent, rather than “race.” Thus the last line should then be translated as “For Our People everything. Out of Our People nothing.”

“Nationalism as the key to organization transcends all religious, political, class, and economic factions or boundaries. Nationalism is the common denominator that all members of La Raza can agree upon” (2). The plan naively promised that nationalism could undo class and ideological divisions through the adoption of an abstract notion of “brotherhood.” The plan also included some general demands, such as economic control by the community, the creation and implementation of culturally sensitive education, a call for the support of Chicano cultural production, and political independence from the two-party system (2 -3). To accomplish the later, the movement should direct efforts towards the “creation of an independent local, regional, and national political party” (4). The liberation of the Chicano nation, it was believed, would lead to the control of “our lands, the taxation of our goods, the utilization of our bodies for war, the determination of justice (reward and punishment), and the profit of our sweat” (4). The plan as a whole is only a few pages (three or four, depending on the printed version), and it did not include specific steps to bring about these changes.

After the 1969 conference, Alurista revised the poem under a new title, “the red Spirit of Aztlán: a plan of National Liberation” and included it as an introduction to his poetry book *Nationchild Plumaraja* (1972). These revisions show that Alurista continued to rethink the basis of Chicano/a identity, unity, and indigeneity. For example, whereas in the 1969 version “Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds,” and Chicanos do not “recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent,” in the 1972 version: “Aztlán belongs to the Creator who brings nourishment to the seeds, and brings rain and sun to the fields to give people crops for food, and not to the yankee empire. We do not recognize capricious borders on the Red Continent” (*Nationchild* 3). The 1972 revision expresses a fundamental critique of land ownership; while in the 1969 version Aztlán belongs to workers, in the 1972 version Aztlán belongs to the “creator.” The shift in land ownership in the second version might have been informed by a spirituality that sees humans in a less anthropocentric way, with the right to work and inhabit the land, but not to own it.¹⁸ The emphasis on the “spiritual” could allow the Chicano/a to assert a sense of belonging to the Southwest, and not conflate ancestry with territorial rights, and thus avoid the symbolic encroaching of Native American land claims. Also of note is the change from “bronze continent” to “Red Continent.” In the first case “bronze” envisioned the Américas as a mestizo continent, in the second, “Red” associated Chicanos/as indigenous people and imagined the Américas as a land under occupation. Whereas the 1969 version only mentioned “brotherhood,” the 1972 reads: “brotherhood and sisterhood unites us, and love for our brothers and sisters makes us a rising people...” (3). Finally, the last line “Por La Raza todo. Fuera de La Raza nada,” had been replaced by the following:

end the genocide and biocide
of the yankee empire

¹⁸ In a 1999 interview, Alurista describes himself as both a Catholic and a Buddhist, as well as a practitioner of Native American spirituality: “I’m connected to my Father Sun and my Mother Earth and my brothers and sisters, trees and ants and what not.” He also said “I’m a Socialist. With a definite Mayan bent to everything.” See the article, “Wizard of Aztlán” by J. Douglas Allen-Taylor, published in *Metro*, in the August 5-11 issue, 1999.

humanize
conscience
organize
for National Chicano Liberation
build
a
Red Nation. (3)

Note that the call is to “build” the nation as part of a struggle to end the destruction of life promoted by the United States empire. Alurista’s openness to rethink and revise his conception of Aztlán and mestizaje supports my view that Chicano/a conceptions of mestizaje and indigeneity have been a constant work-in-progress (as it should be expected in any process of mental decolonization).

Alurista’s body of work shows a consistent concern to rethink Chicano/a indigeneity. For example, notice his poem “we’ve played cowboys,” published in *Floriscanto en Aztlán* (1971):

and we’ve played cowboys
–as opposed to indians
when ancestors of mis charros abuelos
indios fueron
de la meseta central
and of the humid jungles of yucatán
nuestros MAYAS¹⁹

Mexican Americans had for too long been asked to identify with cowboys against the Indian. In the context of the United States, cowboys and Indians had been constructed as enemy entities, with Indians as impediments to Manifest Destiny and to the Western progress driven by the cowboys. Yet, both Mexicans and Native Americans encountered violence at the hands of early Euro-American cowboys, including the Texas Rangers.²⁰ Alurista’s identification with the Mexican charro, who is also indigenous (in this case Mayan), transgressed both the U.S. and Mexican nationalist imaginings of the cowboy. Alurista’s identification with a colonized population *through* mestizaje reversed the direction Mexican Americans had taken towards whiteness.

Armando B. Rendón’s *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) provided another early formulation of Aztlán. Rendón attempted to situate Chicano existence within Aztec cosmology, “We are the people of Aztlán, true descendants of the Fifth Sun, el Quinto Sol” (6). Rendón made a distinction between the “ancient Aztlán” of the Aztecs and what he called “modern Aztlán:”

My people have come in fulfillment of a cosmic cycle from ancient Aztlán, the seed ground of the great civilizations of Anahuac, to modern Aztlán, characterized by the progeny of our Indian, Mexican, and Spanish ancestors. We have rediscovered Aztlán in ourselves. This knowledge

¹⁹ “my cowboy grandfathers/ where Indians/ of the central plateau/ [...] our Mayas” (my translation).

²⁰ For a discussion of lynching in the Southwest, see Ken Gonzales-Day’s *Lynching in the West: 1850 – 1935*.

provides the dynamic principle upon which to build a deep unity and brotherhood among Chicanos. Ties much more profound than even language, birthplace, or culture bind us together—Aztlán represents the unifying force of our non-material heritage. (8)

For Rendón, Aztlán was the spiritual non-material glue that brought Chicanos together, and not necessarily the geographical U.S. Southwest. The Chicano was “bound to the land of Aztlán by his blood, sweat, and flesh” (11). Aztlán was not outside the Chicano body, but *inside* him as an essence that gave meaning to his being: “We are Aztlán and Aztlán is us” (14). Despite Rendón’s militant stance, however, he was not able to escape the limits of Mexican/Chicano patriarchy. As Chicana scholars²¹ have already noted, Rendón equated the “macho” with Aztlán:

The essence of machismo, of being macho, is as much a symbolic principle of the Chicano revolt as it is a guideline for the conduct of family life, male-female relationships, and personal self-esteem. To be macho, in fact, is an underlying drive of the gathering identification of common troubles. The Chicano revolt is a manifestation of Mexican Americans exerting their manhood and womanhood against Anglo society. Macho, in other words, can no longer relate merely to manhood but must relate to nationhood as well. (95)

It is clear that for Rendón, machismo was the guiding principle of Chicano/a nationalism. His inclusion of “womanhood” suggested that Chicanas should first identify with the nationalist goals set by Chicano males.

In *Heart of Aztlán* (1976), Rudolfo A. Anaya also presented Aztlán as a spiritual essence already existing within the Chicano male. The novel tells the story of Clemente Chavez and the struggle of Chicano railroad workers to gain better working conditions and wages. Clemente meets and is guided by Crispin, a wise old man who possesses a magical blue guitar. It is Crispin who introduced Clemente to the myth of Aztlán: “We are the fruit of the people who wandered from the mythical land of Aztlán, the first people of this land who wandered south in search of a sign” (83). In the novel, Aztlán figures as both a lost paradise as well as a cause to be achieved that would enable Chicano/a agency:

Time stood still, and in that enduring moment he felt the rhythm of the heart of Aztlán beat to the measure of his own heart. Dreams and visions became reality, and reality was but the thin substance of myth and legends. A joyful power coursed from the dark womb-heart of the earth into his soul and he cried out I AM AZTLÁN! (131)

For Anaya, as for Rendón, Aztlán stands as the non-material Chicano/a essence, but one that can have real material consequences in the fight for social justice. Aztlán is a trope that binds Chicanos/as to the land and to each other, and from this unity they draw strength. The patriarchy and essentialism of these two thinkers, however, did not erase the potency of Aztlán as a concept embodying Chicano/a desires for unity and liberation. Their conception of Aztlán kept alive a larger discussion about the basis of Chicano/a unity and identity, one in which Chicanas both confronted and drew inspiration from.

²¹ For a critique of Rendón’s patriarchal discourse, see Contreras, p. 108-109, and Chabram-Dernesian, p. 167.

In his critical essay “Refiguring Aztlán” (1997), Rafael Pérez-Torres’ discussed some of the problematic configurations of Aztlán, including a certain male-centered nationalism that idealizes a particular version of the Aztec past, as well as of the Chicano/a desire for a fixed and unitary identity based on essentialist conceptions of “blood.” At the same time, he identified some of the multifaceted aspects of Aztlán in Chicano/a discourse: as a “metaphor of connection and unity,” a “nationalist homeland,” a discursive “site” or “terrain,” “a place of *mestizaje*,” and a “palimpsest.” To these, he added his own proposal to think about Aztlán as an “empty signifier.” He explains: “As an empty signifier, Aztlán names not that which is or has been, but that which is ever absent: nation, unity, liberation” (37).²² Aztlán is a placeholder for an array of Chicano/a utopian desires. Even more, Pérez-Torres formulation of Aztlán as an “empty signifier” suggests, not that the sign is devoid of meaning, but that it constantly overflows with the meanings produce by competing national discourses. The very multiplicity of meanings and coexistence of contradictory political and cultural veins that animate Aztlán reflects its instability without denying its enduring magnetic presence.

Pérez-Torres notes that the concept of Aztlán “marks a matrix where at least two seemingly contradictory strands of Chicano thought meet” (18). The first strand is most concerned with the struggle to transform the “socioeconomic and political systems that have historically exploited Mexicans and people of Mexican ancestry” (18). The other strand emphasizes cultural production and the construction of a separate identity. For Pérez-Torres, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* itself embodied “the tensions between two (ultimately contradictory) veins of Chicano ‘nationalism’... Aztlán variously seems to signal a rationally planned nationalist movement and a mythopoetic cultural essence” (23). Pérez-Torres seems to favor what he calls a “rational” or “political” nationalism because, in his view, it seems to more effectively engage U.S. political and economic structures. He mistakenly claims that “[t]he affirmation of native roots in the cultural identification of the Mexican begins with José Vasconcelos’s service as Minister of Education under President Alvaro Obregón” (25). He seems to assume that mixed race Mexicans did not acknowledge their indigeneity prior to Vasconcelos, or that mestizos/as began to acknowledge their indigeneity because of Vasconcelos, both of which are disputable. Pérez-Torres seems to ignore the continuation of indigenous-based culture and subjectivity in general “mestizo” Mexican culture before and after the Mexican revolution.²³ And as discussed in chapter four of this dissertation, Vasconcelos never called for Mexicans mestizos to identify as indigenous. Chicano/a and other scholars

²² Pérez-Torres favors Aztlán as an “empty signifier,” a term he borrows from Ernesto Laclau. As he explains, “Laclau’s discussion of empty signifiers has helped me think through some of the thorny dilemmas set in motion by the various articulations of Aztlán” (Pérez-Torres 38, note 6).

²³ Here I am also thinking of the observation by Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, when he states: “Culture is not inherited like the color of the skin or the shape of the nose. Social and biological processes are quite different matters; however, they are not unconnected phenomena” (15), and “The Indian faces of the great majority indicate the existence, throughout five centuries, of forms of social organization that make it possible for those traits to predominate biologically. These forms of social organization also permitted cultural continuity” (16).

should remember that what was called “cultural nationalism” and “political nationalism” were not factual descriptions, but shorthand references to what in reality was a heterogeneous movement characterized by a diverse array of Chicano/a organizations and ideologies. The Chicano/a movement of the 1960s and 70s should be remembered as a confluence of heterogeneous organizations that included Leftists and Marxists of all sorts, conservatives and proponents of capitalism, *indigenistas*, and cultural nationalists.²⁴

In “Running for Peace and Dignity: From Traditionally Radical Chicanos/as to Radically Traditional Xicanas/os” (2005), Roberto Hernández makes a distinction between the so-called “cultural nationalists” and those he calls “indigenistas.” For Hernández, cultural nationalists best refers to “those who simply invoke pre-Colombian imagery and symbols for political purposes, yet may discount indigenous perspectives, lived experiences, struggles and living peoples themselves” while *indigenistas* refers to: those who do actively engage and maintain spiritual and political commitments... with the respective teachings of (their) traditional communities in a conscionable and respectful way. Another distinguishing characteristic of the latter group is their tendency to be more historically attuned and acknowledging of how different colonial histories and racialization processes have constructed present-day relations with other native peoples and one another in given spaces as negotiated by geopolitical borders. (128-9)

Hernández further recognizes Chicano/a *indigenistas* as a heterogeneous group who share in common a serious consideration of indigenous spirituality and commitment to indigenous peoples’ decolonization. As an example of these *indigenistas*, Hernández points to Chicana/o participation in the 1969 “Indians of All Tribes” takeover of Alcatraz, in the creation of DQ University (1970), in *Danza Azteca* groups, and in the more recent key organizing role of the Peace and Dignity Journeys.²⁵ These members of the earlier Chicano/a generation attempted to pair their claims to indigeneity with the adoption of

²⁴ For a discussion of Marxist Chicano organizations, such as Centro de Acción Social Autónomo (CASA), see chapter three of Carlos Muñoz’s *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. Martín Sánchez Jankowski’s “Where Have All the Nationalist Gone? Change and Persistence in Radical Political Attitudes among Chicanos, 1976 – 1986,” also highlights the existence of multiple forms of Chicano/a nationalism.

²⁵ “The Peace and Dignity Journeys is a spiritual run that embodies the prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor. This prophecy mandates that all indigenous Peoples in the Western Hemisphere be reunited in a spiritual way in order to heal our nations so that we can begin to work towards a better future for our children and generations to come. The Journey takes place every four years as a ceremonial movement with the goal of reuniting indigenous communities, nations, and people of this continent” (2008 Peace and Dignity Journey brochure). These runs started in 1992, and occur every four years. The runners carry with them sacred staffs entrusted to them by different indigenous nations. Every run has a theme, the 2008 theme was the protection of sacred sites, the 2012 theme is the protection of water. The Peace and Dignity Journeys are another example of how indigenous people are remaking the geography of the continent in a way that defies geopolitical borders.

indigenous-based spiritual practices (i.e. sweatlodge) as well as established links with other indigenous communities.

Xican@ Cartography, Aztlán and the Body Sovereign

Gloria Anzaldúa's ground-breaking *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) conceptualized the borderlands as a heterogeneous site, a space where national narratives intersect, populated by a multiplicity of identities. Pérez-Torres welcomes Anzaldúa's feminist and queer intervention, and her conceptualization of what he calls a "textured and multifaceted sense of self" (34). As he notes, "The refusal to be delimited, while simultaneously claiming numerous heritages and influences, allows for a rearticulation of the relationship between self and society, self and history, self and land" (36). Anzaldúa's concept of the borderlands does not replace Aztlán as the Chicana/o homeland, but instead reformulates Chicana/o space from a feminist and queer perspective. Her "Chicana cartography," as Sonia Saldivar-Hull calls it, locates the Chicana subject in history, geography, and social space for the purpose of engaging in personal and social transformation. This *otra geografía* identifies and seeks to undo the borderlands created by European colonization, by U.S. imperialism, by patriarchy, by homophobia and by racism. Whereas much of movement era literature had centered Chicano identity and agency in the male,²⁶ Anzaldúa's work constructs the Chicana body as the site where gendered nationalist narratives are contested. As Sonia Saldivar-Hull notes in her introductory essay to *Borderlands*, "Not only does Anzaldúa disrupts Anglo-centric nationalist histories, she interrupts the Chicano nationalist agenda as she engages feminist analysis and issue" (3).

Borderlands can be viewed as a book that maps wounds and as a curandera's diagnosis of both physical and psychological illness, or *susto*.²⁷ In the book's first chapter, "The Homeland, Aztlán / El Otro México," Anzaldúa draws our attention to the U.S. Mexico border, now metaphorically reconfigured as an open wound: "The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture" (25). The border is thus a wound created by violent histories of colonial expansion (Spanish/Mexican and English/U.S.) into indigenous land. This border/wound continues to bleed because of the poverty and pain that results from the economic exploitation of Latin America. Anzaldúa warns: "Do not enter, trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot" (25).

Throughout her feminist narrative, Anzaldúa deconstructs false conceptions of the unified subject. She points to both Spanish colonization of indigenous people and to the

²⁶ As did, for example, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez's epic poem *I am Joaquín* (1967), Alurista's first version of "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" (1969), Armando Rendón's *Chicano Manifesto* (1971), and Rudolfo Anaya's *Heart of Aztlán* (1976).

²⁷ Anzaldúa defines *susto* as "a sudden shock or fall that frightens the soul out of the body" (60). Patrisia Gonzales claims that there are many levels of *susto*, some of which are the result of emotional/psychological traumas. The disidentification (or de-indianization) of mestizos/as is also understood by Gonzales as a *susto* produced by colonization: "Our faces, our skin color, tells us we are Indian. But it is the not knowing—of our tribes, of our native tongues—that is our historical trauma" (Gonzales 230).

U.S. colonization of Mexicans in what is now the Southwest as defining events that produced split and fragmented subjectivities:

1,950 mile-long open wound
dividing a *pueblo*, a culture,
running down the length of my body,
staking fence rods in my flesh,
splits me splits me
 me raja *me raja*
This is my home
this thin edge of
 barbwire. (24 – 25)

In order to put herself back together, she must denaturalize (that is historicize) her social position. These geo-political and cultural splits become tangible in the Chicana/o body. In order to survive the queer Chicana has to map out her movements carefully; including when she moves sexually towards someone.²⁸ A misstep can result in being hurt/cut by the sharp edges created by patriarchy and homophobia: “Most societies try to get rid of their deviants. Most cultures have burned and beaten their homosexuals and others who deviate from the sexual common” (40).²⁹ Anzaldúa’s awareness of her otherness leads her to seek coalitions with other who are similarly positioned: “As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland casts me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races)” (102). Her position as a racialized and queer woman allows her to envision alternative geographies and identify these as locations of affinity, including women and homosexuals of other “races.”

As Anzaldúa deconstructs Chicano nationalism, she is faced with the necessity of reinterpreting old Mexican nationalist myths, such as the portrayal of the Aztec past. In her feminist retelling of the founding myth of the Aztec city, the eagle’s consuming of the serpent represents the Aztec’s patriarchal subjection of the feminine:

The eagle symbolizes the spirit (as the sun, the father); the serpent symbolizes the soul (as the earth, the mother). Together, they symbolize the struggle between the spiritual/celestial/male and the underworld/earth/feminine. The symbolic sacrifice of the serpent to the “higher” masculine powers indicates that the patriarchal order had already vanquished the feminine and matriarchal order in pre-Columbian America (27).

In other words, the Aztec time before the Spanish conquest was not a lost utopia, but already a patriarchal society that oppressed women. Even though Anzaldúa is critical of Aztec society as narrated by Mexican nationalism, she refuses to give up Aztec

²⁸ Moraga also notes: “Desire is never politically correct. In sex, gender roles, race relations, and our collective histories of oppression and human connection are enacted” (“Queer Aztlán” 160).

²⁹ “For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior. She goes against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality” (41).

symbolism. In this context, Anzaldúa seeks to recuperate the previous feminine balanced order as represented by the Aztec goddesses, such as Coatlicue and Tonantzin. Pointing out that Catholicism had de-sexualized feminine spiritual power, and thus binded women in a virgin-whore dichotomy. And as Carmen Tafolla and Adelaida R. Del Castillo had done before her in the 1970s, Anzaldúa challenges the patriarchal nationalist narrative that scapegoats Malinali Tenepal as national traitor. She will remind the Mexican/Chicano nationalists who exclude and brand homosexuals and feminists as traitors, “Not me sold out my people but they me” (44).

Anzaldúa’s valorization of indigenous spirituality, even one mediated by dominant Mexican and US discourses of the indigenous, stands significantly apart from the mestizaje formulated by José Vasconcelos. Compared with the later, Anzaldúa’s mestizaje represents a movement towards indigeneity, whether reclaimed or re-imagined. Although a careless reading of her claims to “synthesis” can be confused with the assumption of cohesive and finalized identity. Her text as a whole reveals a keen awareness of the social construction of identity. Alfred Arteaga’s usage of Bakhtin’s theories of the relationship between identity and language can help us see the difference between these two thinkers:

José Vasconcelos conceives mestizaje in this way, so that la raza cósmica is a higher truth for humanity, the synthesis of the European and the American races. But if selection is understood as a Bakhtinian dialogue, then no such synthesis occurs. Instead, subjectivity is seen as the site of competing discourses, discourses possessed with different authorities. In such an active field, the subject asserts a self by employing and opposing various discourses. (150)

In Vasconcelos’ conception of mestizaje, the Indian was coded as the female silent receptor, and contributing passively to the cosmic race. Vasconcelos’ Indians vanish. In contrast, Anzaldúa represents the racially mixed indigenous woman who attempts to balance out her warring heritages, as well as the different worldviews/cultures each represent:

What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (44)

Anzaldúa refuses to see her indigenous self as something that needs to be filtered out into extinction. Her claim to mestizaje did not lead to a cohesive Chicano/a identity, but revealed a previously hidden site of struggle.

In “Who’s the Indian in Aztlán? Re-Writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandón,” (2001)³⁰ Josefina Saldaña-Portillo explains that Mexican mestizo identity has depended on the existence of an “Indian” other, one that could be relegated to the past and the confines of the national museums (409). This hegemonic construction of the Indian, she argues, shaped Anzaldúa’s discourse on

³⁰ Saldaña-Portillo notes that her essay had been prepared a “number of years” before it was published in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader* in 2001.

mestizaje and indigeneity. In response to Anzaldúa's reference to Aztlán as the U.S. Southwest, Saldaña-Portillo claims: "Once again mestizaje is deployed to produce a biological tie with pre-Aztec Indians rather than a political tie with contemporary U.S. Native Americans or Mexican Indians," which according to her contributes to the "rarefication of indigenous people as past"(415). What Saldaña-Portillo fails to recognize is that, in the context of the United States, this discourse has allowed de-Indianized Chicanos/as to seek to reconstruct an indigeneity in ways that go beyond simplistic symbolic appropriation. Anzaldúa's work does not represent the continuation of Mexico's "statist policies" but a break with *mestizofilia*. It should also be remembered that Mexican de-Indianization was not the result of Chicano/a discourse on mestizaje. Chicanos/as, as the children of Mexican mestizos/as and indigenous people have constantly faced further pressure to identify as white (i.e. Hispanic). It is the children of these mestizos/as who now re-claim their indigeneity through Chicano/a identity, effectively reversing the flow of mestizaje.

Cherríe Moraga's "Queer Aztlán: the Re-Formation of Chicano Tribe" (1993) marks another critical feminist intervention into Chicana/o nationalism and its conception of racial mixing and indigeneity. As with Anzaldúa, Moraga's work reveals a deeply personal re-thinking of the Chicano Movement, a time in which Moraga "was a closeted, light-skinned, mixed-blood Mexican-American, disguised in my father's English last name" (145). The alienation she felt was in part due to a homophobic and racist society that asked her to identify with her white father at the expense of her Mexican mother. Her struggle to exorcise these internalized oppressions (i.e. decolonization) meant that she had to rebel not only against society 'out there,' but also involved an intimate and painful rebellion against her core beliefs:

My real politicization began, not through the Chicano Movement, but though the bold recognition of my lesbianism. Coming to terms with that fact meant the radical re-structuring of everything I thought I held sacred. It meant acting on my woman-centered desire and against anything that stood in its way, including my Church, my family, and my "country."
(146)

The fact that Moraga did not actively participate in the Chicano Movement³¹ suggests a failure on the part of movement leaders to speak to women and homosexuals. As Moraga notes, "[w]hen 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan' was conceived a generation ago, lesbians and gay men were not envisioned as members of the 'house,' we were not recognized as the sister planting the seeds, the brothers gathering the crops" (159).

In my approach to Moraga's work, I find Renato Rosaldo's conception of cultural citizenship useful. Rosaldo defines cultural citizenship as "the right to be different and to belong, in a democratic, participatory sense," furthermore,

It claims that, in a democracy, social justice calls for equity among all citizens, even when such differences as race, religion, class, gender, or sexual orientation potentially could be used to make certain people less equal or inferior to others. The notion of belonging means full

³¹ Moraga opens her essay noting that "At the height of the Chicano Movement in 1968, I was a closeted, light-skinned, mixed-blood Mexican-American, disguised in my father's English last name" (145).

membership in a group and the ability to influence one's destiny by having a significant voice in basic decisions. (402)

Moraga makes clear that Chicana/o homosexuals were/are not only demanding membership, but also the right to define the nation and to exorcise the patriarchy and homophobia that first tried to kicked them out.³² But even as Chicano/a nationalism excluded feminists and 'queers,' Moraga continues to identify with Chicanos/as as the nation: "Chicana lesbians and gay men do not merely seek inclusion in the Chicano nation; we seek a nation strong enough to embrace a full range of racial diversities, human sexualities, and expressions of gender ("Queer Aztlán" 164). Despite "the dangers of nationalism," including its "tendency toward separatism," Moraga nevertheless continues to see in nationalism a powerful tool against the colonization of Chicanos/as (149).³³

In "Queer Aztlán," Moraga makes implicit the connection between the body, land, and sovereignty:

Land remains the common ground for all radical action. But land is more than the rocks and trees, the animal and plant life that make up the territory of Aztlán or Navajo Nation or Maya Mesoamerica. For immigrants and native alike, land is also the factories where we work, the water our children drink, and the housing project where we live. For women, lesbians, and gay men, land is the physical mass called our bodies. Throughout *las Américas*, all these 'lands' remain under occupation by an Anglo-centric, patriarchal, imperialist United States. ("Queer Aztlán" 173)

Moraga here seems to be arguing for the attainment of the conditions necessary for autonomy, for what else could be meant by liberation if not the realization of autonomy in all its manifestations, including cultural, physical, and spiritual. Moraga forms part of that cohort of radical women of color that seemed keenly aware of the intersections of different forms of oppression, including those stemming from race, class, gender and sexual discrimination. "As a Chicana lesbian, I know that the struggle I share with all Chicanos and Indigenous peoples is truly one of sovereignty, the sovereign right to wholly inhabit oneself (*cuero y alma*) and one's territory (*pan y tierra*)" (173). For Moraga, the recognition of Chicana/o indigeneity forms part of an epistemological shift that will ultimately make decolonization possible, making clear that the theoretical divide between cultural and political engagement is untrue.

³² Anzaldúa and Moraga were not the first to critique Chicano patriarchal culture. The early work of Anna Nieto-Gomez, Elizabeth Martinez, Marta Cotera, Adelaida Del Castillo, and Enriqueta Longeaux Vasquez helped build the foundations of Chicana feminism. For samples of their writings see Alma M. García's collection of Chicana feminist writings compiled in the anthology *Chicana Feminist Thought*.

³³ In Moraga's futuristic play "The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea," she represents the ways the Chicano/a dream for utopia turned sour because of the sexism and homophobia of Chicano nationalism. Aztlán became a dystopia that excludes lesbians and bases membership on blood quantum and submission to patriarchal and homophobic rules. The men of Aztlán eventually exiled Chicana lesbians to a harsh borderland.

In her insightful (and witty) essay, “*El desorden, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics*,” (1993) Laura E. Pérez writes that Aztlán “exists as an invisible nation,” an “imagined community” which challenges the United States’ nationalist and territorial claims. Chicana/o discursive oppositional configurations appear unreasonable, products of “hallucination,” precisely because they step out of hegemony’s common sense:

Aztlán’s “existence” as a nation goes against “reason”; unauthorized, its discourse has the status of fiction. Both Chicana/o nation and discourse are denied within the ordering reason of dominant culture. But, for Chicana/os, “nation” is made to signify differently, and symbolic language is made to course through alternative venues than the ones imagined, colonized, legitimized by the order that denies oppressed peoples access to its centers of articulation. The Chicana/o nation and its cultural practices are *rasquache*, fly-by-night productions. (“El desorden” 19)

A nation without defined geopolitical borders, without a State, and *even* without its own *migra* (border patrol) seems irrational in this climate of xenophobia and militarized borders.³⁴ The United States’ denial of Chicano/a indigeneity aims to legitimize anti-immigrant rhetoric, which casts Mexican and Chicanos as pests, as Alfred Arteaga points out, “Not the noble and savage Indian nor the genteel Californio Spaniard, the Chicano is the pest, is the bracero who had the audacity to stay and have children in gangs and on welfare” (88). Thus, Aztlán is an antidote to historical amnesia when it reminds the United States national consciousness that Chicanos *didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us*, to paraphrase a popular Chicano slogan.³⁵

Pérez identifies Chicana/o discourses that “operate bidiscursively, articulated both within and without the oppressive ideological territories of ‘Occupied America’” (19). It is this “bidiscursive” quality, I argue, that allows Chicano/a usages of previously dominant discourses of *indigenismo* and *mestizofilia* to work differently, despite the hegemonic intention of the Mexican intelligentsia who first developed them. It is this bidiscursive quality that makes the conception of Aztlán a double-edged sword, cutting through white supremacy and social Darwinism, even as it implicated Chicanas/os within a Mexican colonizing system of representation of the *Indian*. However, this discursive appropriation results in an over abundance of meaning that spills over the borders of both Mexican and United States dominant racial discourses. Chicano/a discourse on indigeneity is thus oppositional, pitting one nationalist system of representation against another, and in the process, creating a third space of enunciation. Pérez rightly calls the way that Chicanos/as put together *Aztlán* “*rasquache*,” with the Chicano/a subject stripping “parts from ‘nation,’ ‘nationalism,’ and ‘identity’ as if they were unattended vehicles on the street” (“*El desorden*” 20). Cultural artifacts – including concepts – are thus reconfigured by Chicanos/as in unexpected, and heretical, ways. Chicana/o

³⁴ For an example of an academic’s construction of Latinos as a national “threat” see Samuel P. Huntington’s essay “The Hispanic Challenge,” in *Foreign Policy* magazine, in the March/April 2004 issue.

³⁵ Although in their introduction to *The Last Supper of Chicano Heroes: Selected Works of José Antonio Burciaga* (2008) Mimi R. Gladstein and Daniel Chacón attribute this phrase to Burciaga, it is not clear to me that he was the first to have used it, and the editors do not provide a direct reference.

intellectual activists appropriate dominant discourses and turn them into a “guerrilla discourse,” transforming them into tools of liberation. The Chicano/a makes a living and different archive from the scratch and scrap of nationalist discourses. The power of Aztlán, is not that it provides Chicanos/as with a national origin, but that it names what is desired in the present and the future. As Cherríe Moraga states: “*Aztlán* gave language to a nameless anhelito inside me” (“Queer Aztlán” 226). It names the space of liberation that Chicanos/as desire, what has been felt as a painful absence. And like other desires the body experiences, it cannot be easily controlled or monitored by those in power.

In *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies* (2002), Mary Pat Brady calls Chicana/a conceptions of Aztlán and borderlands, “countercartographies—spatial narratives challenging those that have gained a normative or taken-for-granted status,” as well as propose “entirely different conceptualizations of spatiality altogether” (6). However, “the radicality of an anti-imperial geographic imaginary can be lost when identities are merely resedimented under a new nominative” (146). It is therefore not enough to simply oppose one nationalist narrative with another, or one claim of land ownership with another, but it is imperative that the new narrative of space (which includes the relationship between subjectivity and space) breaks with the logic and discursive patterns of “imperial narratives.” That is, if Aztlán is to point to a decolonial horizon, it must be disassociated from conceptions of land ownership, especially when these reinforce other forms of domination: “To simply make new claims to land is not in and of itself transformative. Indeed, the danger here is not only that such claims duplicate imperial spatial narratives but that they might also duplicate imperial racial and gender narratives as well” (Brady 148). Chicanos/as face the challenge of imagining conceptions of sovereignty and decolonization that do not involve neocolonizing conceptions of nation and of human relationship to land/earth. With this in mind, I would now like to turn to the work of Roberto Rodriguez and Patrisia Gonzales, two indigenous-identified Chicana@s who have begun to map this *otra geografía*.³⁶

In his self-published book, *Codex Tamuanchan: On Becoming Human* (1998), Chicano columnist and scholar Roberto Rodriguez attempted to redefine the concept of Aztlán: “But unlike the 1960s, Aztlán is not or should not be about ‘the Southwest,’ but rather about a spiritual nation that is not tied to the land. The land is sacred, but it also does not belong to anyone” (121).³⁷ With this in mind, Rodriguez proposes a re-configuration of Aztlán:

I would like to explain the meaning of Aztlán. Not the 1960s concept, nor something pre-Cuauhtemoc [pre-Spanish colonization], but of what it means today [1998]. For me, I see it as a part of a spiritually liberating idea and I see the time has come or is fast approaching that Raza proclaim ourselves to be part of a sovereign spiritual nation. Incidentally, this nation is not a geographic entity and it

³⁶ Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez are married journalists and scholars who often work together. For example, they co-produced the documentary film *Amoxitli San Ce Tojuan: We are one – Nosotros somos uno* (2005), about “the origins/migrations of indigenous-based Mexican peoples and of relationships with all the ancient peoples of the continent” (from the back cover).

³⁷ Alurista had made the same claim in his 1972 revision of the preamble “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” which I have already discussed.

has no geopolitical borders. It is us and we take it wherever we go. And of course, no one or no one body has a copyright on this idea. (*Codex* 95)

He pointed to a section of the 1847 Disturnell map, the official map of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, labeled “Antigua Residencia de los Aztecas” (Old Residence of the Aztecs). The reference appears in present-day Arizona near the Colorado River. Rodriguez has excavated many such maps in an attempt to show a historical connection between some of Mexico’s indigenous people and what is now the U.S. Southwest. Rodriguez’s discussion of the map is meant to highlight a story of migration and previous hemispheric-wide indigenous relationships that facilitated movement, trade, and cultural exchange. It is only with European colonization, and the more recent borders erected by nation states, that those relationships have been severed. Rodriguez’s work can be added to that of Anzaldúa and Moraga, a critical mapping of the Chicano/a the subject in history and space. Rodriguez consciously places indigenous ancestry and culture (what he calls a “red and brown perspective”) at the center of Aztlán. “To view ourselves as sovereign is uplifting and liberating and is even beyond the concepts of decolonization and self-determination. It is the antithesis of being conquered, colonized and oppressed” (96). The self-proclamation of our physical, cultural and spiritual self-determination, as a first step towards decolonization, circumscribes the authority of the state and from those who are the contemporary beneficiaries of European and Euroamerican colonization. It removes the need for government validation, since “the [U.S.] government can not be the arbiter of who is sovereign or who is Indian” (102). Rodriguez is careful to dissociate himself from an exclusionary nationalism by professing a spirituality that encompasses a greater sense of interconnectedness: “The thing is to expand our community – expand it to the point where the entire universe is our community” (157). As such, Aztlán is the historically and culturally specific name Chicanos/as give to their utopian vision of a better world that includes all aspects of creation. Roberto Rodriguez defiantly states: “We are indigenous to these lands and we are indigenous to the Americas. But even more than that, we are indigenous to mother earth. No one needs to give us permission to think this way” (43).

In her mixed genre book *The Mud People: Chronicles, Testimonios and Remembrances*, Patrisia Gonzales speaks of the “rosario de testimonios,” stories and prayers she found in Mexico. Chicana-Kikapoo by ancestry, Gonzales is a journalist, *curandera* (traditional healer), and recently received a Ph.D. in Mass Communications from the University of Wisconsin.³⁸ *The Mud People* maps *otra geografía* which includes the memories and wounds of the people of Mexico, who are sometimes referred to as “Mexico Profundo.”³⁹ “Like so many xicantlaca (Nahuatl for gente chicana), I found my own heart and face in what Mexican scholar Guillermo Bonfil Batalla called México

³⁸ Gonzales’ forthcoming book *Red Medicine: Traditional Indigenous Rites of Birthing and Healing* explores indigenous-based healing and birthing practices. The book will be published by the University of Arizona Press, as part of their First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies series.

³⁹ For Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla “Mexico profundo is formed by a great diversity of peoples, communities, and social sectors that constitute the majority of the population of the country” (1). Mexico Profundo shares in common the continuation of indigenous cultures.

profundo, deep México, indigenous México, campesino México, urban masses México, deep like red and black.”⁴⁰ Gonzales’ work marks a discursive political intervention in Xicanism@, that includes cartographies of resistance, to help Chicanos/as move and contest power, and to recall memory:

I came to place myself within the stories of my antepasados. The geography I have explored is the “circle of memory” de los grandes. I came as an ancestor of my grandchildren. I must leave them stories, plant them in the barro. I paint las ollas, historias de olla. My chronicles and testimonios are how I heal the future.⁴¹

This is a geography that is made of land and memory, of history and love stories. Gonzales borrows Vine Deloria’s concept of “sacred geography” to claim that: “The land is made sacred by its stories. History and geography become one with what is sacred” (60). In a lot of ways, *The Mud People* is about the struggle to reclaim and rebuild space, including: the *maquiladoras* where the *costureras* work, Mexico city after the 1985 earthquake, the neighborhood through renters’ associations and housing advocates like Super Barrio,⁴² the ejido (communal) lands, the memory of the students massacred and disappeared by the government at Tlatelolco in 1968 and of their mothers who ask for their return, and the memory and meanings of those struggles:

The land has left a story here, a story to tell the children. The land has given me many stories. In Laredo, Texas, there is the hanging tree that still grows. As San Pedro Park in San Antonio, Mexicans were hung near the sacred spring, where my ancestors and other indígenas prayed. (59-60)

This Mexico Profundo, one that stands in opposition to the Mexican government and the intellectuals associated with them, can more broadly inform Chicano/a subjectivity and politics. Mixed race Indigenous-identified Chicanos/as like Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez are able to see beyond *the local walls and border* (those borders identified earlier by Gloria Anzaldúa) and forge links of struggle with indigenous people (mixed race or not) on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, and stand against the ongoing economic and cultural exploitation, political exclusion, and racial discrimination.

Patrisia Gonzales’ journey to Mexico is an attempt to retrace her ancestral *pasos* (steps), to situate herself in the history, and to claim indigeneity as a living praxis beyond symbolic appropriation. She says: “I came to México as a Xicana Indian. Detribalized Indian. I have worn many skins” (Gonzales 278). Gonzales understands detribalization in a similar way to Bonfil Batalla’s conception of de-indianization, as a disidentification and rupture in historical memory caused by colonial practices that disrupted indigenous memory and tribal affiliation. “As detribalized people, we have to create the structures that were lost as a result of colonization, especially our connection to our elders. Other elders from our relatives would become teachers, Diné, Lakota, Onondaga, Hopi, waiting for us to know ourselves again, to return to our ombligos indígenas” (Gonzales 208). Gonzales understands Xicanos/as as detribalized and deterritorialized indigenous people that because of a history of colonization and its legacies have been dislocated from their

⁴⁰ Unnumbered, from the book’s opening essay, “Ollin–The Journey.”

⁴¹ *The Mud*, from “Ollin-The Book,” (unnumbered).

⁴² A street performer who became the face of the housing justice movement in Mexico City in the 1990s.

indigenous historical and cultural specificity. Xicanos/as have suffered a long history of displacement, removal, occupation, and forced migration that has shaped the way we understand ourselves today. She says “Xicana Indian,” and in doing so, she departs from Mexico’s dominant discourse of *mestizofilia*. She continues Cherrie Moraga’s and Roberto Rodriguez’s earlier discussion of sovereignty, which for her is about building autonomy in concrete ways: “I want to know that my food and clothes come from my own hands... that the tortilla is a sacrament, round like the sun and a woman’s skirt. Traditional. Traditional. I call it autonomy. Self-reliance. My spider in this woman” (5). For Gonzales, what links the “traditional” with “autonomy” is the feminine spiritual healing practice of the curandera: “And we began to return to our grandmother’s ways, to experiment with las yerbitas, los tés, los remedios, el apapacho... We have sought to bring the medicine out of our bodies, our communities, and our histories. As la comadrita Sylvia says, ‘Healing is part of self-governance’ (150). While Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* is a book that maps wounds, Gonzales *The Mud People* is also a curandera’s intervention into these wounds or *susto*. Through the sharing of painful memories, Gonzales has “healed in relationship and stained my heart with flowers” (278).

(In)Conclusion

In *Chicano Poetics*, Alfred Arteaga wrote that Chicano/a subjectivity was always unfinished and always the result of competing discourses. Thus, being Xicano/a: “is not a state of being but rather an act, xicando, the progressive tense, ando xicando, actively articulating the self. The infinitive xicar meaning to play, to conflict, to work out dialogically unfinalized version of self” (155). This unfinishedness of xican@ subjectivity slips out of the ideological cages created by biological determinism or essentialisms based upon blood quantum. It also overflows the confines of both Mexican and U.S. nationalisms. Rather than wait for recognition or validation of our Chicano/a indigeneity, we should continue to seek ethical and horizontal coalitions with other indigenous people, and other people struggling for their liberation/decolonization. As we work to untangle (decolonize) our thinking and bodies from centuries of colonialism, let us continue to explore and re-imagine Chicano humanity in ways that will bring us closer to a more egalitarian and democratic world. C/S

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