

Copyright

by

Alexandrea Noel Pérez

2017

**The Report Committee for Alexandra Noel Pérez
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

**“We’re Writing a War Against a Story:”
Counter-Histories, Counter-Narratives in *Bodega Dreams* and *The
People of Paper***

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

John Morán González

Julie Minich

**“We’re Writing a War Against a Story:”
Counter-Histories, Counter-Narratives in *Bodega Dreams* and *The
People of Paper***

by

Alexandrea Noel Pérez, B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2017

Dedication

This project is dedicated to those who fight the war against single stories.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my advisors John Morán González and Julie Minich for their helpful comments and encouragement throughout this project. Also to my undergraduate Mellon advisor José F. Aranda, who still continues to inspire me daily without knowing it. Lastly, many thanks to my family, my friends here in the program, and my fiancé Jared —the pep talks, happy hour dates, ice cream, and endless love do not go unnoticed.

Abstract

**“We’re Writing a War Against a Story:”
Counter-Histories, Counter-Narratives in *Bodega Dreams* and *The
People of Paper***

Alexandrea Noel Pérez, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: John Morán González

Despite a long history of Latina/os in the United States, in many cases Latina/os are still considered foreigners who exist outside of American culture. For Latina/o writers this is especially difficult, as Latina/o literature is often painted as a one-dimensional genre, filled only with stark realist narratives of social protest that do not belong to an American literary canon. For Ramón Saldívar, a generation of “postrace” writers and aesthetics has emerged, marking a new Latina/o literary movement that can address this issue. Thus, through an examination of two novels by Latino authors, Ernesto Quiñonez’s *Bodega Dreams* (2000) and Salvador Plascencia’s *The People of Paper* (2005), I compare how each work pushes back against both Latina/o and Anglo-American literary norms and categories. In distinct ways, each novel establishes a conventional Latina/o historical narrative and then transforms or transculturates it by appropriating canonical texts of American literature. By the end, these appropriations produce a counter-narrative which

questions and subverts this traditional history of the Latina/o experience and resists imperialist definitions and representations. By questioning a one-dimensional and static Latina/o historical narrative and by recognizing current innovations in the field, Latina/o literature as a whole can overcome barriers to legitimacy and assert that Latina/os have formed and are forming a literary legacy of their own in the United States. Furthermore, we can demonstrate how multiple literatures can exist and retain legitimacy under one “nation,” clutching to the hope that we can achieve this for the Latina/o community as well.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 1 <i>Bodega Dreams</i> : The Post-Civil Rights Novel	9
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> as a Framework for Counter-Narrative.....	14
The Kennedy Legacy and Historical Re-telling.....	17
Revision as Resistance	21
Chapter 2 <i>The People of Paper</i> : “We are waging a war against a story”	23
Combatting the Conventional Latina/o Narrative	29
Saturn’s Historical Re-tellings and Metanarrative	33
The War Against the Commodification of Sadness	37
CONCLUSION	40
Appendix A Figures	42
Works Cited	43

Introduction

“Because, Chino, this country is ours as much as it is theirs. Puerto Rican limbs were lost in the sands of Iwo Jima, Korea, in Nam. You go to D.C. and you read that wall and you’ll also see our names: Rivera, Ortega, Martinez, Castillo. Those are our names there along with Jones and Johnson and Smith” (*Bodega Dreams*, 26).

“We are fighting a war against a story, against a history that is being written by Saturn. We believed that silence was our best weapon against the intrusion of Saturn, that our silence would in turn silence Saturn. But we have discovered an allergy to the lead, and learned that history cannot be fought with sealed lips, that the only way to stop Saturn is through our own voice” (*The People of Paper*, 209).

At the onset of the twenty-first century, when a burgeoning conversation surrounding the presence of U.S. Latina/os¹ was about to permeate the nation, Latino authors Ernesto Quiñonez and Salvador Plascencia wrote two intelligent and powerful novels that were not hesitant to address certain harmful aspects of Latina/o literature and the view of Latina/os in America at large. Still considered a minority literature today and therefore outside the traditional American canon, novels considered “Latina/o” possess certain tropes and conventions, such as immigrant protagonists, poverty, and gang life. This type of “realist protest” narrative, according to Ramon Saldívar, is an important part of the Latina/o canon (576). Stemming from the Chicano Movement and the Civil Rights Era, realist protest novels were important vehicles for Latina/os who needed to make their struggles known in order to force necessary civic change. However, over the latter half of the twentieth century the Latina/o population in the United States has diversified, not only becoming the greatest ethnic minority population, but by the year 2050 minority

¹ I am choosing to use the configurations of Latina/o and Chicana/o to identity groups of U.S. born or U.S. migrated people of Latin American or Mexican descent, respectively (the terms Latinx or Chicanx could also be used interchangeably).

ethnic groups will comprise more than fifty percent of the population². With this demographic change, it is imperative for new stories of Latinidad to enter the conversation which do not simply depict them as an impoverished, under-educated, and undocumented people group. Besides a simple demographic change, it has become obvious through the 2016 presidential election³ that the increasing Latina/o population is perceived as a threat to American culture and security. Rather than embrace the fact that American culture is transnational, the desire to see Latina/os as foreign and outsiders to the American experience has only surged in the public eye. As a result, it is essential now more than ever to showcase transculturation within works of Latina/o literature, illustrating the fact that a Latina/o story and experience is in fact an American story and experience; the division is both discriminatory and arbitrary. Stepping forward and answering this call, Quiñonez and Plascencia's novels, *Bodega Dreams* and *The People of Paper*, not only address the fact that a Latina/o story is not limited to one conventional narrative, but they also highlight a transcultural experience, forcing their audiences to consider their Latina/o narratives within the canon of American literature.

Addressing these complicated issues of assimilation, transnationalism, and transculturation in his book *Ends of Assimilation*, John Alba Cutler attempts to negotiate the relationship between specifically Chicana/o literature and this sociologist concept of assimilation (though he does expand his findings to comment on ethnic literatures as a

² According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of July 1, 2015 the Latina/o population totaled 56.6 million, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or racial minority. Furthermore, the point at which the non-Hispanic white alone population will comprise less than fifty percent of the population will occur in 2044.

³ Examples of this anti-Mexican, anti-Latina/o, or anti-immigrant language and attitude embraced by Donald Trump have been chronicled by major news outlets such as CNN, NBC, and The New York Times. These include the campaign promise to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border and have Mexico pay the cost, referring to Mexican immigrants as "rapists" and "bad hombres," and his attacked on Mexican-American federal judge Gonzalo Curiel.

whole). He provides Chicago school sociologists Robert E. Park and E.W. Burgess's definition which says assimilation is "a process of interpenetration and fusion" by which ethnic minorities incorporate "memories, sentiments, and attitudes" from the United States and retain them "in a common cultural life." (3). Not only is this process supposed to be a natural part of immigrant life and the American "melting-pot," it is also considered inevitable. While the concept of assimilation was intended "to combat the racial essentialism of early twentieth-century nativism with a theory of ethnicity," assimilation ideology nevertheless purports a theory of Eurocentric white superiority. Through this discussion, Cutler maintains that, while scholars have not given assimilation its proper attention as a fundamental aspect of Chicana/o, Latina/o, and other ethnic literatures, it is by no means the only way to read the works of people of color. Furthermore, while assimilationist ideology might be at the crux of many texts, Chicana/o and Latina/o authors are dealing with this question in a variety of methods and answers.

Cutler identifies "types" of assimilation centered novels: anti-assimilationist, segmented assimilationist, and transnational. The first, quite easy to define, is a culturally nationalist position which "insists that Chicanos (and more often) Chicanas who depart from a narrowly defined vision of cultural authenticity have betrayed themselves and their people" (10). An extremely popular perspective within the Movement and Movement-era literature, this brand of ideology can be seen in seminal Chicano texts such as Rodolfo Corky Gonzales's "Yo Soy Joaquín,"⁴ Luis Valdez's *Teatro Campesino*⁵,

⁴ Gonzales' *Yo Soy Joaquín* is a poem which incorporates Aztec and Christian mythology to discuss the mestizo identity of Chicanos. The poem personifies the Chicano nation as a specifically masculine identity who is split across two cultures: Mexican and American. The poem acts as a rallying cry to a burgeoning Chicano nationalism.

⁵ Luis Valdez's *Actos*, a handbook or manifesto, even, for the *Teatro Campesino* states: "Chicanos must not be reluctant to act nationally. To think in national terms: politically, economically and spiritually."

and *El Plan de Atzlán*⁶. These texts combat assimilationist ideology with hyper-nationalism and unfortunately “[commit] literature to an untenable ideal of cultural maintenance and [reinscribe] assimilation as the proper model for thinking about cultural change” (10).

A remedy to assimilationist ideology’s premise of a homogenous American nation, a theory of segmented assimilation suggests that rather than assimilate to American, middle-class society, ethnic minorities simply “adapt,” surviving by acculturating to certain counter-culture behaviors in order to promote a sense of ethnic solidarity (i.e., joining a gang, becoming an unskilled laborer, etc.). This is obviously problematic, and it promotes a “culture of poverty hypothesis” which states that ethnic minorities are the cause of their poverty and failure to be upwardly mobile. Furthermore, this idea “reaffirms the superiority of white middle-class values”—economic mobility—by pitting them against “self-defeating gestures of ‘ethnic solidarity’” (16-17). By considering Chicana/o and Latina/o literature as solely novels of impoverished neighborhoods and gangsters, this inherently promotes this idea that Latina/os are naturally bound to adapt to certain types of lifestyles and only these particular types of narratives are “Latina/o” or relate to a Latina/o identity. This “adaptation” in a form of ethnic solidarity is a glossy version of separate but (un)equal.

Cutler describes a third vantage point by which to consider the question of assimilation, that of transnationalism. These types of works “subvert the nation form,” focusing on transnational cultural forces within the United States, usually from the continued immigration into the United States from Latin America and the historically

⁶ *El Plan Espiritual de Atzlán* states: “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.”

imbalanced power dynamic between the United States and its southern neighbors. Furthermore, these transnationally oriented texts highlight “lateral” cultural exchanges between Latina/os, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans rather than “vertical” Latina/o-white racial relations. (17). While these works refuse to see assimilation as an “end point,” the imbalanced relationship between these nations repeatedly encounters with a sense of “the colonialist of power remaining” (18). While these texts refuse to accept the homogenous nation as the end all be all and therefore disrupt traditional assimilationist ideology, Cutler insists that the United States still remains as the supreme power in these texts, and these novels simply reveal the imbalanced nature of these transnational relationships.

With the crux of assimilationist ideology at the heart of so many Chicana/o and Latina/o texts, it is easy for Latina/o literature (and other ethnic literature to be sure) to become filled with one-dimensional narratives of Latina/os in poverty and gang life, as radical cultural nationalists, or the victims of colonial power imbalances. We are thus faced with a complicated issue: How can we write Latina/o literature in the United States without Latina/o culture being erased by means of its being produced in the United States. Cutler addresses this complex issue, calling it “a difficult balance...Chicano/a literary works celebrate Chicano/a culture, which has been devalued and denigrated in the United States, yet these same works know that attempts to represent that culture inevitably transform it” (11). Therefore, Chicana/o writers are given the staunch task of transforming their culture through acts of literary representation, with their critique of assimilation “crucially [depending] on their self conscious literariness—their repeated awareness of producing culture rather than merely describing it” (11).

It is in this vein, that the two authors I have selected in this essay, quite self aware in their works' literariness, negotiate this complicated issue of Latina/o literature and produce texts which acknowledge these stereotypical Latina/o narratives and self-consciously rework them against hyper-canonical American texts in order to "transculturalate" and "produce culture" rather simply describe culture or assimilate to a U.S. dominant white culture. In *Bodega Dreams*, Ernesto Quiñonez "remixes" the great American novel, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, through the story of a young Nuyorican man named Chino. What starts off as a traditional Latina/o novel of poverty and the need to leave the barrio and join white society, this narrative quickly shifts as Quiñonez uses different narrative techniques to pick apart aspects of both Latina/o literature and *The Great Gatsby* in order to create something totally new, but also to demonstrate how the "American" ideals of nostalgia and self-fashioning read (in quite similar ways) across both cultures. Quiñonez rejects the assimilation/anti-assimilation crux in order to put forth a remix or a transculturation text which does not remain focused on the imbalance of power between both nations. Rather, through a re-telling of American history and an ending chiming with Latina/o utopia, the novel reveals the short-comings of the American exceptionalist, colonial attitude. Daring to touch the supreme canonical text that is *The Great Gatsby*, Quiñonez takes one of the most red-blooded American novels and effortlessly remixes it with a Latina/o narrative in a move of transculturation that reveals how arbitrary the lines between both canons and nations really are.

Performing a similarly self-conscious move, Salvador Plascencia works against the late twentieth century "Program Era"⁷ canon in his novel *The People of Paper*. Again, breaking the stereotype of one-dimensional Latina/o narratives filled with drug dealers

⁷ I unpack this concept in the last section of this essay, referencing Mark McGurl's text of the same name.

and gangsters, Plascencia “remixes” the highly experimental “workshop” novel of the likes of American writers David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers, and Jonathan Franzen to create a totally new and compelling Latina/o text, which, through its use of metanarrative, “wages a war against the communication of sadness” (Plascencia, 53). Like Quiñonez, Plascencia sets up his novel to tell the tale of another poor Mexican immigrant crossing the border to settle in East L.A. and befriend a gang of cholos and low-riders. However, we quickly realize this will not be the case, and through a mix of historical re-telling and metanarrative, Plascencia purposely disrupts our notion of a conventional Latina/o narrative and what a Latina/o author is allowed to do. Again, proving the arbitrariness of such distinctions between what is “American” and what is not, and rejecting the harmful, neoliberal concept of marketable or “commodity” ethnic literature.

Both Quiñonez and Plascencia take unequivocally American works of literature, the modern and the postmodern American novel, and rework them with stereotypical Latina/o narrative tropes to create works that are entirely new and speak against this division of literatures, this hierarchical division of nations within the United States, and this harmful delineation of what ethnic literature can be, what it can touch, and what it can look like. Through appropriation, historical re-telling, metanarrative, and other formal techniques, the texts provide resistant narratives which subvert a traditional history of the Latina/o experience, resist imperialist definitions and representations, and contribute to Saldívar’s idea of a “post-race aesthetics”⁸ for the twenty-first century. By

⁸ Saldívar explains this concept by saying that the “new problem” of race is no longer in shades of black and white nor is it based within particular *cultural nationalisms*. In the twenty-first century, ethnic writers are using their literary works to explore transnational experiences rather than a “borderlands” or “black vs white” ethnic subject of the twentieth century, usually through stitching together genres of fantasy, history, and science-fiction. This exploration of a transnational experience proves a foundation for understanding new, contemporary versions of self, identity, and cultural worlds “at the intersections of the global South and North” (Imagining Cultures, 3-4, 10).

questioning a one-dimensional and static Latina/o historical narrative and by recognizing current innovations in the field, Latina/o literature as a whole can overcome barriers to legitimacy and assert that Latina/os have formed and are forming a literary legacy of their own in the United States. Furthermore, we can demonstrate how multiple literatures can exist and retain legitimacy under one “nation,” clutching to the hope that we can achieve this for the Latina/o community as well.

Bodega Dreams: The Post-Civil Rights Narrative

Ernesto Quiñonez's novel *Bodega Dreams* (2000) centers on the Spanish Harlem community toward the end of the twentieth century and follows the story of Chino, a young Puerto Rican/Ecuadorian man living in Spanish Harlem with his wife, Blanca, who dreams of completing his college education, moving out of the neighborhood, and creating a better life for his wife and future child. Sapo, Chino's childhood best friend and pana, is a high school drop out, and his method to achieving greatness involves working for organized crime lord, Willie Bodega. Based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Chino and Bodega cross paths when Bodega realizes Chino is the brother-in-law to his long lost love, Vera, and instructs Sapo to bring Chino into their circle. In exchange for helping him get to Vera, and taking pride in Chino's intelligence and determination, Bodega begins to help Chino improve his circumstances, hoping that Chino will join his gang and aid him in his goal to make Spanish Harlem a better place.

While a superficial reading of *Bodega Dreams* suggests that Quiñonez is simply writing another Latina/o tale of stark poverty, dismal education, and the desperate need to escape the *barrio*⁹, this is not the case. Quiñonez purposefully begins his tale with two iconic Latino male characters: Chino, an adolescent reminiscent of the protagonists of Piri Thomas' *Down These Mean Streets* or Manuel Manrique's *Island in Harlem*,¹⁰ and Bodega, the charismatic civil rights activist and former member of the Young Lords

⁹ Ramon Saldívar refers to these tropes as "typical instance of realist protest Chicano narrative" in his article "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Posttrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction" (576).

¹⁰ *Down These Mean Streets* is a Nuyorican memoir chronicling the life of Piri Thomas growing up in Spanish Harlem, experiencing racism, and eventually serving seven years in prison. Manuel Manrique's novel tells the story of another young male Nuyorican named Antonio. Published a year earlier than Thomas' work, the novel deals with many of the same themes of *barrio* life. Quiñonez also alludes to Miguel Piñero's poetry collection *La Bodega Sold Dreams*. Although not a novel, this 1980 text also deals with Piñero's coming of age in Spanish Harlem.

Party¹¹ who fights for change. With both sides of the spectrum, the bildungsroman voice who desires escape and the radical voice who desires justice, Quiñonez is implementing archetypal figures of a traditional Latina/o civil rights-era narrative, and the text can be read as tool of realist fiction with a message of social justice and reform. However, as the novel continues we become aware that this is not an anachronistic tale, but rather a work that is self-aware of its contemporary presence. Therefore, through its appropriation of *The Great Gatsby* and its discussion of alternate histories, *Bodega Dreams* resists a traditional Latina/o narrative structure and suggests that we read this “counter-narrative” as a legitimate member of a holistic American literary tradition—not only with its lineage in the modern American novel but as part of America’s multi-/transnational present.

Current critical work on *Bodega Dreams* touches upon its “postmodern ethnic condition” and its challenge to “grand narratives” and assimilationist narratives. Elías Domínguez Barajas puts forth this argument in his article, “The Postmodern Ethnic Condition of *Bodega Dreams*” (2014), positioning *Bodega Dreams* as a member of a specific group of ethnic fiction which “suggests the emergence of a particular social sensibility that reflects the impact of ethnicity in character development...within the context of the post civil-rights era” (7). For *Bodega Dreams*, this concept functions in a unique way: Quiñonez’s seemingly anachronistic appeal to ethnic solidarity in his novel, set 30 years after the civil rights movement, appears to work against this idea of the postmodern ethnic condition. However, Quiñonez’s challenging treatment of ethnic

¹¹ The Young Lords Party (YLP) was a New York based “Puerto Rican revolutionary nationalist organization analogous to the Black Panther Party (BPP).” It was mostly active between the years 1969-1974. Although short lived, “the YLP led militant, community-based campaigns, which linked local economic grievances to structural racism and Puerto Rico’s neo-colonial relationship to the U.S.” It self-identified as a socialist group and claimed over 2,000 members by 1971 in different branches across the northeast. It disbanded in 1974 as a result of inter-party conflict and violence (Fernandez, 2004).

solidarity and the “grand narrative” of assimilation and Americanization as part of the immigrant’s story and American dream actually questions “the mainstream perception of ethnicity as a transitional phase in the Americanization of those on the cultural periphery, a phase that if prolonged...breeds alienation and ultimately harms the collective” (12). This challenge to the “grand narrative”¹² of cultural assimilation as a prerequisite for upward social mobility is described by Barajas as “a hallmark of the postmodern ethnic condition inscribed in Quiñonez’s novel and the work of other Latina/o writers in the post-civil rights era (12).” Barajas argues that Quiñonez’s “counter-narrative” to assimilation is represented by Bodega, who acquires his money illegally by pushing drugs in order to buy up neighborhood real estate. In this way, the novel presents a radical counter-narrative to protagonist Chino’s more conservative narrative of going to college, getting an education, and leaving Spanish Harlem (i.e., assimilation), and this pushes back against modernist notions of the traditional immigrant narrative.

Nevertheless, Barajas ultimately believes that the novel “fails to render an unambiguous counter-narrative or ‘vision of the future’ that epitomizes the socio-political goal for the ethnic group[s] it looks to represent” (13). Barajas argues that Quiñonez ultimately “redirects the plot so that it follows a more conventional course,” and while the characters in the novel embody the postmodern condition by “rendering a counter-narrative that justifies their non-conformist nature and world view,” Quiñonez renders all their counter-hegemonic work ineffective by having the story’s major characters end up dead, in prison, or in a state of indeterminacy (13). As a whole, Barajas considers the novel an embodiment of the postmodern ethnic condition with its treatment of ethnicity

¹² Barajas is referring to J.F. Lyotard’s definition of grand narratives, who defines them as “the foundational philosophies by which social stability and control are largely maintained” (1984, xxiii–xxiv). According to Lyotard, these unifying narratives used to legitimize power are no longer credible as a result of the postmodern condition.

as a defining factor in the lives' of its characters while also positing a counter-narrative to the "grand narrative" of the civil rights era. However, he believes that its rejection of a radical counter-narrative in favor for a conventional ending leaves us without an answer to the question of "correcting social inequality," and he ends by asserting that this novel is evidence for ethnic identity remaining a fertile ground for a new political project (24).

While Barajas is left feeling unfulfilled by the novel's inability to take a radical stand, Holly Flint Jones seems to think the solution lies in a discussion of multicultural citizenship and "positive liberty." In her article, "Dreaming the Nuyorican in Ernesto Quiñonez's *Bodega Dreams*: Representations of Multicultural Citizenship in 21st Century Latino/a Literature," Jones frames the novel's conflict in a similar manner to Barajas' grand narrative/counter narrative, except she positions her argument within the framework of what she calls "multicultural citizenship." For Jones, the novel presents two competing forms of multicultural citizenship, one being the American dream of traditional immigrant assimilation and the second which she calls the "Ricanstructionist Dream" embodied by the character of Bodega and his less-than-legal plan for Latina/o progress. While the traditional dream grants multicultural citizenship through means of education followed by assimilation, the Ricanstructionist dream desires both the promise of education within American democracy and a sociopolitical promise of hybridity. However, similar to Barajas' point, Jones argues that both promises remain unfulfilled, leaving us with the question, "Which is the most promising model of multicultural citizenship for New York living within the 21st century American empire?" (30). Attempting to give an answer, Jones argues that true democratic citizenship encompasses more than just access to education, voting rights, and equal representation. Quoting John Dewey's definition of democracy, she states "democracy is a personal way of individual

life; that it signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all relations of life” (Dewey, 222). Following Dewey’s philosophy, Jones sees true democracy as more akin to the obtaining of “positive liberties.” Borrowing from the work of Stephen Fishman, she takes his term “positive liberty” which he defines as “the development of dispositions and habits of living that allow each individual to contribute to and take from a shared culture...[a] notion of freedom [which] balances attention to individual rights with attention to our duty to promote the welfare of others,” and argues that Chino’s accumulation of positive liberties are what can help him achieve true democratic citizenship, or what Jones believes is truly multicultural citizenship (39). For Jones, Chino’s accumulation of “positive liberties” comes from his education and experiences within the classroom. His education is what allows him to develop “dispositions and habits of living” that will allow him to be a multicultural citizen and develop a sense of duty to promote the welfare of himself and others.

Both writers make very similar conclusions, but while Barajas situates his argument within postmodern theory of grand narrative versus counter-narrative, Jones positions her work within ideas of citizenship and multiculturalism. By doing so, she addresses a concern more central to Latina/o studies as a whole—how Latina/os can obtain “citizenship” both literally and figuratively while also not renouncing their cultural ties to Latin America. Furthermore, both writers address how Quiñonez begins with what seems like a conventional Latina/o narrative yet challenges this tradition as part of a postmodern condition or aesthetic—providing either a radical counter-narrative or a radical notion of multicultural citizenship and hybridity. However, neither article seems to find success in *Bodega Dreams*’ attempts. These radical counter-narratives fail in the end, or the promise

of multicultural citizenship persists but is not yet achieved. In my reading of *Bodega Dreams*, I argue that the “counter-narrative” it provides through *the Great Gatsby* framework and the alternative history of the American Dream are radical moves that, through their success as engaging and persuasive features of the novel, demonstrate the triumph of a radical counter-narrative and the advances of multicultural citizenship. *Bodega Dreams*’ resistance to a conventional Latina/o narrative, its successful appropriation of the modern American novel, and its revised history of the American dream are innately radical moves enacted by Quiñonez in order to prove the equally radical notion that Latina/o narratives and their characters are legitimate members of an American literary tradition and that the American literary tradition is inherently multicultural.

The Great Gatsby as a Framework for Counter-Narrative

While not obvious from the novel’s title, *Bodega Dreams* revisits *the Great Gatsby* narrative, with some plot elements explicitly imitated and others revised for a Nuyorican tale. Our first signal is in fact the novel’s title, which references the Fitzgerald short story “Winter Dreams,” published 1922 and considered to be a kind of first draft of *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 121). Standing in for Nick Carraway, the novel opens with a first-person narrator named Chino who is reflecting back on a time of his life when he met a man named Willie Bodega—a staunch idealist who we quickly learn is no longer alive. Early on in this retrospective narrative, we receive explicit mention of “a green light of hope,” which Chino uses to mention Bodega, saying “when that short-lived light went supernova, it would have a blueprint of achievement and desire for anyone in the neighborhood searching for new possibilities” (14). Bodega as a Gatsby figure is evident throughout the novel, with mentions of him being an “idealist” who is “in love with the

past” (123, 50). Similar to Gatsby, Bodega’s drug business has a false pretense as a real estate agency owned by a Jewish “Harry Goldstein,” again, a clear imitation of Gatsby’s patron Meyer Wolfsheim. Bodega’s long lost love, Vera, is sister-in-law to Chino, and their romance is short-lived until she betrays Bodega and we realize she has secretly been involved with Nazario (who we then take as the Tom Buchanan stand-in). Throughout the novel, Chino describes Bodega as someone “from a different time” who “talked a lot of dreams” (125, 71). Finally, the novel ends with Nazario and Vera’s betrayal and Bodega’s death, with the last scene taking place at Bodega’s funeral. However, in contrast to the *Gatsby* ending, many people come to pay their respects to Willie Bodega. With this revision, the novel ends much more optimistically with one last invocation of “the green light” and a revision of Gatsby’s final line “Tomorrow Spanish Harlem would run faster, fly higher, stretch out its arms farther, and one day those dreams would carry its people to new beginnings” (213).

The fact that Quiñonez can utilize the *Gatsby* narrative so effortlessly and so successfully is striking. Rather than feeling like a tough stretch, the novel wears its appropriation well, and its tweaking of the original reads naturally. This successful appropriation performs two functions: one, it transforms *The Great Gatsby* into a novel of immigration, and two, it expands the traditional story of the American dream. Gatsby’s migration from North Dakota to East Egg reads as an analogous tale to a Puerto Rican migration to Spanish Harlem. Gatsby’s desire to fit into high-class, east coast society despite his lower-class, midwestern heritage reads as a similar anxiety found in Latina/o immigrant narratives, struggling or resisting assimilation. However, despite the extreme discrimination Chino and Sapo face in their public schools, characters such as Bodega and Sapo do not experience anxiety over their “outsider” status (although Chino longs for

escape at first). Quite the opposite: Bodega's plan for a "Great Society" is determined to turn Spanish Harlem itself into a thriving Latina/o utopia rather than transform into something that "fits in." I argue that this lack of immigrant anxiety functions as part of the novel's own self awareness as an appropriation. The novel is an "other," yet the narrative and the characters possess their own complexity and authenticity, lacking insecurity over its performance.

Besides transforming *The Great Gatsby* into a novel of immigration, *Bodega Dreams* also expands the notion of the American dream so famously critiqued by Gatsby. While still presented as somewhat unobtainable, *Bodega Dreams* brings the American dream trope out of a modernist American context and inserts it into a contemporary Latino narrative. Latina/os immigrating to places like New York, Texas, California, etc. can also be seen as participating in the long tradition of this American dream. While Quiñonez is not sugarcoating this idea to say that the idealized American Dream is truly achievable for Latina/os, it transforms this imaginary from a specifically white, European immigrant history to something that includes Latina/os—and even present-day Latina/os. The era of the American dream is not over just because the immigrants aren't white, and there are still people coming into our country that deserve the same opportunity. Furthermore, rather than providing a disillusioning picture of this trope, Quiñonez provides an optimistic perspective with his Spanish Harlem "dream" ending, where the green light is one of "hope" and the neighborhood is filled with the sounds of salsa dancing, conga drums, and bilingualism—a dream of "new beginnings" (213). While re-appropriating Gatsby's treatment of the American dream, Quiñonez revises this trope in to allow for inclusion of Latina/o populations, and replacing Fitzgerald's disillusionment with bright "green" optimism allows for this inclusion to exist without insecurity.

The Kennedy Legacy and Historical Re-telling

Besides the novel's *Gatsby* framework providing a subversion and expansion of the traditional Latina/o immigrant narrative, other plot elements also perform this work, such as the novel's motif of names and re-naming coupled with a subversive history of the Kennedy legacy. These other elements not only provide a new way of reading the traditional Latina/o narrative, but they also showcase the novel's self-awareness as an appropriation and its lack of anxiety as such.

The novel opens with a strong of focus names, re-naming, and recorded neighborhood history. On the very first page, describing his best friend Sapo, Chino explains "As far back as I can remember, Sapo had always been called Sapo and no one called him by his real name, Enrique...But Sapo didn't look like an Enrique anyway, whatever an Enrique is supposed to look like. Sapo could only be Sapo. And that's what everyone called him" (3). He then goes on to explain that most people in his neighborhood earn nicknames as a rite of passage—"To have a name other than the one your parents had even you meant you had status in school, had status on your block. You were somebody. If anyone called you by your real name you were un mamao, a useless thing. I mean you hadn't proved yourself" (4). Chino, like other boys in his neighborhood, has proven himself through street-fighting and has achieved a rechristening (his birth-name is Julio). However, his wife Blanca questions this process of renaming when people leave the neighborhood. She asks Chino, "don't you hate it when people from the neighborhood who somehow manage to leave change their names? Instead of Juan they want to be called John." Chino swiftly retorts, "I see your point. But what's in a name anyway? A Rivera from Spanish Harlem by any other name would still be from Spanish Harlem" (13). This obsession with names so early in the novel suggests

the novel's awareness as a "renaming" of *The Great Gatsby*; *Bodega Dreams* is essentially *Gatsby* with the names changed. However, reading this in the context of Chino's narration and conversation with Blanca, Gatsby's name change does not take away from its identity; names are arbitrary signifiers. Although *Bodega Dreams* might be a new cover, the authenticity of the narrative remains intact, and by no means is *Bodega Dreams* a lesser or cheaper version. Furthermore, we learn from the neighborhood boys that earning a new name is something of which to be proud. *The Great Gatsby* has obviously proved itself as a quintessential American narrative, and its long-lasting appeal has earned it the right to be re-written in new and exciting contexts. The U.S. Latina/o experience, which is an authentic American experience, is then the new space to situate this beloved American tale. The new "name" does not cheapen this—"because what's in a name anyway?" Furthermore, Blanca's obvious allusion to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* just reiterates the fact that this scene is a meta-moment where the novel acknowledges and successfully defends its obvious appropriation. The layering of Shakespeare on top of *Gatsby* on top of the Latina/o narrative inherently claims how a Latina/o narrative fits within an American canon.

Enhancing this theme of renaming and revision, we learn in the novel's opening that Chino is an artist and the neighborhood's best "R.I.P. painter." This means that whenever there's a death in the neighborhood, the deceased's relative will pay for Chino to graffiti-paint a tribute. Chino narrates one request, saying:

Someone close to the deceased, usually a woman, would knock on your door. 'Mira, my cousin Freddy just passed away. Can you do him a R.I.P?' You would bemoan Freddy's death whether you knew him or not, say you were sorry and ask what had happened, like you really cared. 'Freddy? Freddy was shot by mistake. He wasn't stealin' not'en.' You'd nod and then ask the person on what wall she wanted the R.I.P. and what to paint on it. 'On the wall of P.S. 101's schoolyard. The back wall. The one that faces 111th Street. Freddy would hang

there all night. I want it to say “Freddy the best of 109th Street, R.I.P.” And then I want the flag of Boriquen and a big conga with Freddy’s face on it, can you paint that?’ (5).

As an R.I.P. painter, Chino is a documenter of neighborhood history. He not only pays tribute to fallen neighbors, but he also records small pieces of history on the walls he paints. The woman’s point “Freddy was shot by mistake. He wasn’t stealing nothing” is significant, because it points to the fact that Chino’s paintings are records of subaltern history. The mainstream historical account is that Freddy was a criminal shot for stealing; the marginalized or subaltern history is that Freddy was shot by mistake on account of a biased police officer. Without Chino’s painting, this alternate account would only exist as anecdote, but Chino’s documentation on the public school wall transforms it from personal history to neighborhood history. This might be atypical historical documentation, but this *rasquache*¹³ form of archive is nonetheless valid and is one of the only means by which members of Spanish Harlem can record neighborhood history. Chino’s R.I.P.’s question mainstream histories and give alternate histories a place in the public sphere. Furthermore, this subtle inclusion of police brutality, coupled with Bodega’s known past with the Young Lords Party, posits another crucial purpose for complicating the perception of Latina/os in the public sphere—the subject of racial profiling. Although the novel is pre-Black Lives Matter, Quiñonez places both the idea of modern-day racial profiling and minority activism on the table through this particular scene and Bodega’s Young Lord past. While the Young Lords disbanded in 1974 as a result of inter-party conflict, the importance of Chino’s R.I.P.’s suggest that in reality racial profiling and police brutality are far from being objects of the past, and we can read

¹³ I am using the term *rasquache* coined by Tomás Ybarra Frausto in his text, “Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility.” I unpack this term later in this essay.

this moment as looking forward to something like a Black Lives Matter movement, not only to fill the void left by the activist groups of the 1960s, but also to the larger work that Chino's R.I.P. paintings cannot possibly achieve and which the novel itself wants to carry out.

Combining the novel's obsession with names and its promotion of alternate histories, Quiñonez employs a Kennedy trope which demonstrates how the Latino immigrant Bodega can be seen as an alternative Kennedy and how a subversive history of the Kennedy legacy can be rewritten as a Latina/o immigrant narrative. During Chino's initial meeting with Bodega in which Bodega tries to convince Chino to join his group, we discover Bodega's obsession with the Kennedy dynasty. Bodega asks, "Did you see that special on the Kennedys, on channel thirteen, Chino?" (25). Chino answers no, to which Bodega replies:

Yeah, well that shit told the truth. Yo, ese tipo era un raquetero. Joe Kennedy was no different from me. He already had enough money in the twenties but he still became a rumrunner. Alcohol is a drug, right? Kennedy sold enough booze to kill a herd of rhinos. Made enough money from that to launch other, legal schemes. Years later he fucken bought his kids the White House. Bought it. Yeah, he broke the law. Like I'm breaking the law, but I get no recognition because I am no Joe Kennedy (25-26).

In this reply, Bodega is essentially appropriating the history of the Kennedys in a way that perfectly illustrates how the Latina/o experience and the "American" experience are one and the same. He takes the name Kennedy—the most famous American lineage—and transforms it into something unrecognizable. He quite literally gives Joseph Kennedy a new name with the personal yet diminutive "Joe," and tells a different history that imitates his own personal history. Bodega states this more explicitly a few lines later, saying:

Because, Chino, this country is ours as much as it is theirs. Puerto Rican limbs were lost in the sands of Iwo Jima, Korea, in Nam. You go to D.C. and you read that wall and you'll also see our names: Rivera, Ortega, Martínez, Castillo. Those are our names there along with Jones and Johnson and Smith (26).

In the end, Kennedy is just an arbitrary signifier for a bootlegging immigrant who made his money in just the same way as Bodega, and both Martínez and Johnson are written on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in our nation's capital. Reducing the Kennedy legacy to its foundation and providing this subversive history of America's favorite family is a radical demonstration of the Latina/o history and the Latina/o experience inherently being a part of American history and an American history. Bodega's Kennedy fascination combines the novel's preoccupation with names and histories and provides the perfect illustration for the Latina/o experience being including in an American canon and history, while also questioning a traditional Latina/o immigrant narrative that would suggest otherwise.

Revision as Resistance

June Dwyer most notably highlights the success of Quiñonez's *Gatsby* imitation in her article "When Willie Met Gatsby: The Critical Implications of Ernesto Quiñonez's *Bodega Dreams*." For her purposes, she considers *Bodega Dreams* a "postmodern appropriation" whose existence brings "the questioning [or] disabling of certain modernist hierarchies," and ultimately argues that the text comments on "the transformation of the American dream in postmodern America" and theorizes "Quiñonez's position as contemporary Latino writer confronting the American canon" (165). Dwyer stresses the success of the novel's *Gatsby* appropriation, although she argues that a major reason for its achievement is its peaceful, not subversive nature. She explains that writers from colonized countries or "native intellectuals" are typically anxious about being "swamped by the dominant Western culture [and] also losing their

lives and [...]becoming lost to their people” (167). She cites Frantz Fanon’s work saying “the literary production of native intellectuals progresses from imitating their colonizers to recuperating their pre-colonial literature” in order to “revitalize, legitimize, and bolster the present struggle...In modifying and modernizing the tradition, they become part of it” (168). However, she presents Quiñonez as a contrast to this idea, stating that he lacks “the postcolonial writer’s angry urgency.” For Dwyer, Quiñonez has inserted himself into the American canon from a new perspective, “but his intent does not seem subversive...he seems much more serene than [other native intellectuals] are in his position” (168). Because Quiñonez does not demonstrate any anxiety of influence and his voice “has not been considered a political threat," *Bodega Dreams* can peacefully exist as a new way of looking at the American dream and at the classic modernist American novel.

While Dwyer is correct that the novel imitates and revises the *Gatsby* novel quite beautifully and effortlessly, it is impossible in the year 2017 to read this work as non-subversive. In a time when both the media and our president consider Latina/os and immigrants entirely un-American, it is important now more than ever to establish how U.S. Latina/os are not only American but are an inherent part of American history, and their experiences are part of an American historical narrative. While a novel suggesting that the Latina/o immigrant experience and *Gatsby*’s experience are interchangeable might not have seemed so radical 15 years ago, with current media outlets painting a picture of Latina/o otherness, the claim that Latina/os share a history with Anglo-Americans is entirely subversive. Furthermore, this claim questions a static, one-dimensional Latina/o narrative of immigration and assimilation and instead highlights how Latina/os can retain their hybrid identities and yet still be part of an American experience.

The People of Paper: “We are waging a war against a story”

When reading Salvador Plascencia’s *The People of Paper* for the first time, conventional tropes of Latina/o literature seem to jump right out from the opening pages. With its U.S.-Mexican border setting, its immigration plot, and its primary characters being poor agricultural laborers and cholo gang members, Ramon Saldívar has remarked that *The People of Paper* “could be seen as typical instance of realist protest Chicano narrative” (576). While the novel begins in such a way, this is most definitely not the case. Saldívar adds, “The genealogy of Plascencia’s novel no doubt includes aspects of Chicano fiction as represented in the works of Américo Paredes, Tomás Rivera, Helena Maria Viramontes, or Sandra Cisneros.” However, when it comes to form and aesthetics, the novel has much more in common with writers such as “Mark Z. Danielewski, Dave Eggers, Jonathan Franzen, Michael Chabon, Jonathan Lethem, Alex Shakar, or David Foster Wallace than with those of other Latino writers” (576). Published by McSweeney’s in 2005, the novel is an obvious model of contemporary experimental fiction, or, as Mitchum Huehls describes in his article “The Post-Theory Theory Novel,” a prime example of “paradigmatic metafiction, a dizzying conflation of form and content, reality and fiction” (289). While the conventional Latina/o tropes might stand out at the novel’s beginning, by the end the text’s experimental form (literally) takes control, leaving it a uniquely compelling novel for readers and critics alike.

While Plascencia might not be rethinking an iconic novel in the way Quiñonez treats *The Great Gatsby*, it is clear by Saldívar and Huehls’ comments that Plascencia is in fact working with a particular canon of contemporary American literature—specifically “Program Era” literature, discussed at length by critic Mark McGurl in his text *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*. In this work of

literary criticism, McGurl's attempts to categorize and historicize the aesthetics of postwar fiction that have resulted from an startling increase in creative writing programs across the country in the latter half of the twentieth century. While McGurl is not claiming that fiction coming out of writing workshops are all manufactured and unoriginal, he does demonstrate how works coming out of university MFA programs possess similar formal aesthetics. He describes these texts as "reflexive" and "systematic" and claims that the three major aesthetic formations of this canon are the inclusion and engagement with technology, a fascination with cultural difference, and a preoccupation with economic and cultural insecurities (31-32). Furthermore, within all these aesthetic formations, McGurl describes the tendency to self-referentialize found in all these works, labeling it "autopoetics" (32). Whether from a traditional realist or radical experimentalist angle (both can be found within the workshop), McGurl confidently asserts that "most postwar writers exhibit this auto-poetic self referentiality and most of their work gravitates toward one or several of these formations" (34).

McGurl's observations of the program-era novel are extremely evident in Plascencia's text. A graduate of Syracuse University's MFA program, Plascencia's *The People of Paper* is an extremely self-referential text—so much so that Plascencia appears as one of his own characters in multiple forms. It is a work concerned with cultural difference as well as the industrialization of the small town of El Monte, California over the course of the twentieth century. Its highly experimental textual elements are considered alongside writers such as Jonathan Franzen, Dave Eggers, and David Foster Wallace. Through McGurl's classification of this particular generation of writing along with these associations made by critics such as Huehls and Saldivar and writers such as

George Saunders¹⁴, it becomes quite clear that Plascencia is engaging with a particular canon of American literature: the post-war, postmodern products of the writing workshop.

Similar to my reading of Quiñonez, I am interested here in the way in which Plascencia transculturates a canonical American text (or group of texts) with his own unique Latina/o narrative. In order to perform this work, he first establishes a conventional Latina/o immigrant narrative through his plot and characters and then, by using both alternate histories and metanarrative, provides a counter-narrative which transforms both his “realist” Latina/o text and the “program-era” novel into something entirely new. Plascencia takes particular tropes of Latina/o literature and flips them on their head: gang members become flower pickers, La Malinche is exonerated, and an LA turf war becomes a war against the author—Plascencia himself, whom the characters call “Saturn,” akin to a tyrannical deity. Like Bodega with his transformation of the Kennedy legacy and Chino with his R.I.P. paintings, Plascencia tells alternate histories that rewrite our notions of these conventional Latina/o tropes and even reinvent the history of colonization itself. By doing so, Plascencia’s novel refuses to exist solely as a stark, Latina/o realist narrative filled with poverty and sadness. On the contrary, Plascencia’s use of metanarrative in which the characters revolt against the author’s “commodification of sadness” further demonstrates how Plascencia is both establishing the conventional Latina/o immigrant narrative and destabilizing it by using providing historical re-tellings and performing a metanarrative to declare a war against this harmful view of a one-dimensional Latina/o narrative and experience.

¹⁴ George Saunders wrote a review for the novel, calling it “A stunning debut by a once in-a-generation talent” (book cover). In an interview with Vanderbilt University’s *Nashville Review*, Plascencia called Saunders a “mentor” (An Interview with Salvador Plascencia, 1 April 2010).

Unsurprisingly, much scholarship surrounding *People of Paper* is centered on the experimental, postmodern elements of the novel. Barely even touching upon its Latinidad, Mitchum Huehls discusses *The People of Paper* as part of his concept called the “post-theory theory novel.” For Huehls, the post-theory theory novel is one in which authors “use the well-known tropes of poststructural theory as the tools and building blocks for various forms of unreal realism, for speculative fictions that contribute to the composition rather than the deconstruction of the world” (283). This post-theory theory novel works in contrast to the “theory novel” of an older generation which overtly incorporated theory in order to “reflect on it, complicate it and sometimes go beyond it” (284). While the theory novel pushed writers and readers to “self-consciously consider and reveal its own conditions of possibility” the post-theory novel sees theory as “just another thing in the world” rather than “the key to all things” (287). Therefore, Huehls maintains that the key difference between the theory and post-theory novel is the post-theory novel’s ability to “construct entirely new literary and aesthetic forms out of the conceptual components of theory...declining theory’s invitation to turn their conditions of possibility against themselves, these texts use theory’s concepts to build, rather than undermine, the world” (288). Huehls reads *The People of Paper* strictly within this paradigm of the post-theory novel. For Huehls, Plascencia’s use of metanarrative puts an innovative spin on theory’s “death of the author.” Rather than claiming the author is dead, Plascencia seems to say the author is actually “inevitable” (290). Through the back and forth war between author and characters, the novel “directs readers’ attention to the space and time beyond the contours of the novel” (292). In this way, literary realism is constantly “injected” into the metanarrative until the novel eventually “turns against language, sending its characters beyond the text and into the world” (292). As a result,

The People of Paper utilizes poststructural theory, but ultimately suggests that there is something more and that the “real” is located outside the body of the text. Huehl’s uses *The People of Paper* as an emblem of post-theory fiction, leaving its Latinidad as something for other critics to take up.

Cristina Rodríguez touches heavily upon *The People of Paper*’s identity as a specifically Latina/o text, attributing its experimental style to two particular Chicana/o cultural practices: *con safos* and *rasquachismo*. Rather than positioning Plascencia’s experimentalist techniques into a concept of postmodernism or poststructuralist theory, she argues that these qualities can be easily recognized as traditional forms of Chicana/o barrio practices of Los Angeles and should be read in this way; a reading that ignores the specific locale of Los Angeles is not an adequate interpretation of the novel. Therefore, she reads the use of tagging in the novel performed by the El Monte Flower gang as well as Plascencia’s own “tagging” throughout the novel as an example of the Chicana/o cultural practice of *con safos*, in which gangs add the tag “c/s” in order to prevent rival gangs from defacing their mark. The term *con safos* does not possess an English equivalent, but the essential meaning is “the same to you.” If a rival gang were to deface a pre-existing tag with vulgarity, the “c/s” would protect the original inscriber by saying “the same back to you.” The second concept, *rasquachismo* is a term coined by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto who defines it as “a witty, irreverent, and impertinent posture that recodes and moves outside established boundaries” (493). It is a Chicana/o working class sensibility that attempts to “make do” with what is at hand, a “recoding of objects, taking what one has and changing it into what one needs” (494). A *rasquache* aesthetic undermines principles of decorum in order to build or decorate with whatever is at hand. Rather than throw away what is not used, *rasquachismo* enables the working-class

Chicana/o to utilize limited resources to create and embellish her/his environment as means to survival.

For Rodríguez, we can read the EMF tags “as announcing the name, and marking off the place of the El Monte barrio” (490). These tags protect them from the force of Saturn (the character embodiment of Plascencia), “[operating] under the assumption of semiotic ipseity indicated by *con safos*” (490). As a result, “when Saturn exes out every ‘EMF’ tag he sees, even those with exes protecting them, he is attempting to erase the actual EMF from El Monte” (491). By crossing out the EMF tags, Plascencia/Saturn is not only erasing the EMF, but through the power of *con safos* he is also erasing himself. Rather than participate in the commodification of sadness and “colonize his beloved city,” Plascencia erases himself and “surrenders his authorship” (493). Furthermore, the unique textuality of the novel, with multiple points of view arranged in columns (and later arranged haphazardly) on the pages, displays a *rasquache* technique. Plascencia arranges text “filling [...] all available space with bold display” which includes a “juxtaposition of various graphics, narrators, and formatting.” By doing so Plascencia “imitates barrio style” without appropriation, choosing instead to construct his barrio through his *rasquache* textuality.

While Rodríguez embraces the novel’s Latinidad, she does so by pointing out that the highly experimental elements of the novel are a result of traditional Chicana/o barrio practices. This argument is compelling, and addresses the novel’s stylistic metanarrative in a way that embeds it within Chicana/o cultural practice and aesthetics rather than Huehl’s poststructuralist landscape. My reading seeks to emphasize the novel’s working within Latinidad, but rather than place it within traditional Chicana/o custom, I argue that Plascencia’s Latina/o narrative is part of a new, twenty-first century Latina/o practice of

providing counter-histories that assert an Americanness as a political move rather than center on a Chicana/o, anti-assimilationist, nationalist tradition. While her emphasis on the transnational in her conclusion does this kind of work, her emphasis on rasquachismo and con safos minimizes its effect.

Furthermore, while Rodríguez dismisses Saldívar's reading of the novel because he "ultimately situates *The People of Paper* in the same category of 'Chicano social protest'" (and I do agree with this observation), I still would like to consider my own argument within his concept of a "post-race aesthetic" (485-486). For Saldívar, the individual genres of fantasy, history, realism, etc. cannot "suffice as formal stand-ins for the concrete content of justice," yet "amalgamations of novelistic form and generic styles that by virtue of their surface complexities inaugurate a new stage in the history of the novel" (594). This mixture of genres which as a result create a text that goes "in and out of fantasy" become the new medium by which post-race novels, "[compel] our attention to the gap or deficit between the ideals of redemptive liberal democratic national histories concerning inclusiveness, equality, justice, universal rights, freedom guaranteed by rule of law, and the deeds that have constituted nations and their histories as public collective fantasies" (594). Rodríguez rightfully contends that Saldívar's move to create a category of postrace aesthetics does "very little in terms of analyzing the particular function or aim of experimental form in the case of each work," and I hope to perform this work in my analysis to extract the specific experimental forms of Plascencia and explain how they function within the text to destabilize a one-dimensional concepts of Latina/o narrative and assert a sense of Americanness that breaks an assimilation/anti-assimilation dichotomy that plagues the history of Latina/o literature.

Combatting the Conventional Latina/o Narrative

As I previously stated, *The People of Paper* begins by utilizing particular tropes of Latina/o literature, and the few that I will focus on are a border crossing, and a Los Angeles street gang, and a Malinche¹⁵ figure. The novel starts with the story of Federico de La Fe and his daughter Little Merced, who, after La Fe's wife Merced leaves him for his chronic "enuresis," decides to immigrate to the United States. Filled with the grief of losing his wife, La Fe tells his daughter that they are "going to Los Angeles where he could work in a dress factory and [Little Merced] could go to school and learn about a world that was built on cement and not mud" (19). From the opening pages, we encounter a story of sadness which incites a desire in La Fe to find a new, better life for him and his daughter. La Fe will be a factory worker, but Little Merced will find the opportunity to receive an education in a more secure world—cement to signify the developed world of the United States rather than mud which signifies rural Mexico. Along the journey to the border, we encounter other aspects of Chicana/o culture including a Lucha Libre fight and a game of Lotería (a game analogous to American Bingo). Although not significant to the plot, these details reinforce what seems to be a conventional Chicana/o immigrant narrative. While border crossings in works such as Sandra Cisneros' *Caramelo*¹⁶ or Gregory Nava's film *El Norte*¹⁷ are much more complex, Plascencia's narration of the

¹⁵ Most famously discussed by Octavio Paz in his text *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Malinche is the name given to Hernan Cortes' mistress, guilty of acting as his translator and betraying her people for self-gain. Paz states that she is "a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated, or seduced by the Spaniards (86)" She embodies womanly shame and sexual promiscuity.

¹⁶ In *Caramelo*, Cisneros describes border-crossing in many of her chapters. These include depictions of the border patrol agents, robbery, losing items through crossing, and the exhausting cross-country trips involved. In a variety of ways, Cisneros emphasizes the border-crossing experience.

¹⁷ Nava's film is a particularly harsh depiction which involves a coyote who attempts to scam the young teenagers, Enrique and Rosa, before they cross over. Furthermore, the two kids enter the United States by crawling through a sewer pipe filled with rats.

border crossing is quite subdued. After making a few final purchases from Tijuana, Little Merced tells us “When we came across a white chalk line that ran from the Pacific shore to the Rio Grande, my father looked around to see if anybody was following us or watching through telescopes. When he felt that we were alone we stepped over the chalk line and walked toward a world built on cement” (31). While border crossing is a defining moment in many Latina/o narratives, Plascencia defies our expectations and glosses over La Fe and Little Merced’s immigration. Free from the hardships of the border wall, the river, treacherous coyotes, or robbers, La Fe and Little Merced simply cross over the “chalk line” into the world of California. With this uncharacteristically easy border crossing, Plascencia reveals to us that this is not a typical Chicana/o immigrant narrative and his true focus will be on something entirely different.

The first people La Fe and Little Merced encounter after they cross over into the United States are the EMF gang. La Fe unfortunately learn that he cannot work in a Los Angeles dress factory because “they wanted people who carried laminated cards with the stamp of the bald eagle” (33). As a result, the two decide to settle in a small town called El Monte where live a street gang called El Monte Flores¹⁸. According to Little Merced, “the gang wrote tags on telephone poles and on the asphalt where Medina Court intersected Las Flores street” (33). Plascencia then inserts an image of an EMF tag (Figure 1), and we also realize that the book sections are also marked by EMF hand signs or “gang symbols” (Figure 2). With graffiti tags and gang signs illustrating the novel, the EMF appears to be a stereotypical Latino street gang. Little Merced evokes this persona when she says, “The city gangs with their pressed zoot suits, Al Capone cars, and

¹⁸ In her article, Cristina Rodríguez provides evidence that the EMF was an actual gang. “Plascencia did not invent EMF. The real modern-day city of El Monte is still home to El Monte Flores or EMF, one of the oldest street gangs in the United States, which did in fact begin in the 1950s as a group united by their work in El Monte’s flower-picking industry” (487).

automatic guns knew better than to call EMF a gang of sissy flower pickers” (34). Plascencia is utilizing the Luis Valdéz zoot suiter¹⁹ of popular culture to bring a particular image to mind. However, the Latino gangster stereotype is quickly revoked when Little Merced adds “But EMF was not like the city gangs either. They did not loot fruit stores or steal car parts; they just drank mescal and worked in the furrows harvesting flowers, next to my father” (34). The EMF turns from a pachuco-style street gang to a group of flower pickers whose knives cut bouquets and potpourri rather than other men. Again, Plascencia takes a prominent trope of Latina/o literature and transforms it into something that defies our expectations. Eventually the EMF will begin to wage a turf war, but it will be against Plascencia himself rather than a zoot suit city gang.

Finally, the novel begins with a Malinche figure in the form of La Fe’s estranged wife, Merced. For the first half the novel, Merced is presented as a woman who left her husband and child for nothing more than his bed-wetting condition. Plascencia describes Merced’s betrayal saying:

Merced had surrendered to the voice and bristled face of another, gradually lured from Federico de La Fe by a voice that came through a tiny carved window. Merced resented the smell of piss and the wet bed...As Federico de La Fe slept next to little Merced, warming her with his wetness, Merced would go to the kitchen to eat limes and to pull the cob of corn from the adobe wall, exposing a tiny window. It was through that opening that Merced was courted...For three years words had been whispered into the wall...trying to woo Merced away from her husband. It was with the wall between them that they consummated (112).

¹⁹ Luis Valdez’s play *Zoot Suit* dramatized the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial and the Zoot Suit Riots of the early 1940s. These historical events involved Mexican-American men known as “pachucos” who were known for wearing the zoot suit as an identity-marker and who rioted as a result of racial discrimination and police brutality following the death of one of their members. Valdez’s production was the first ever Chicano play on Broadway and was also made into a film adaptation. The character of “El Pachuco,” who wears a zoot suit, speaks in caló Spanish (Chicano slang), and serves as the play’s narrator has become a Latina/o cultural icon.

Not only is Merced wooed by another man and as a result leaves her family, but Plascencia later tells us that this other man is white (113). In fact, through inserting himself into the story via metanarrative, Plascencia reveals that he too was left by a woman named Liz for a white man. Through the metanarrative, Plascencia tells her, “You fuck a white boy and my shingles loosen, the calcium in my bones depletes, my clothes begin to unstitch...You sell-out. Vendida. You are worse than the Malinche, worse than Pocahontas. Fucking white boys making asbestos fall from the attic” (118). In this section of the novel, Plascencia specifically invokes the character of the Malinche to identify Merced and her metanarrative counterpart Liz. One of the most common Latina female stereotypes after the Virgen de Guadalupe, Plascencia’s utilization of a conniving, treacherous woman is an obvious reference to the trope of La Malinche. However, as I will explain in my next section, Plascencia’s use of historical re-telling and metanarrative work the trope against itself to dismantle this damaging female stereotype of Latina/o literature.

Saturn’s Historical Re-tellings and Metanarrative

Similar to Quiñonez’s reworking of the Kennedy legacy, Plascencia rewrites several “histories,” including the stories of Rita Hayworth, Cortes and La Malinche, Pocahontas and John Smith, Napoleon, and Samson and Delilah. It is worth pointing out that these histories are not particular to Latin America. Instead, Plascencia uses a range of histories from Spanish, French, and British colonization, as well as popular culture and biblical mythology. In doing so, Plascencia not only tells these histories from an alternate perspective, but he also demonstrates how stories of love, loss, betrayal, and sadness are not reserved for one type of people of literary history. Our stories, even the sad ones, are shared by everyone.

In the novel's first section, Plascencia devotes much attention to the story of Rita Hayworth, American actress and dancer who was born Margarita Carmen Cansino. One of the most popular actresses and pin-up girls of the 1940s, Plascencia rewrites the history of Hayworth to explain how she had to be transformed from a U.S. Latina to an red-blooded American in order to be successful in Hollywood. According to his narrative, "Rita Hayworth bleached her jet black hair into a light shade of auburn...she pinched her cartilage until her mestizo nose was pointy. The in-house linguist at Fox Pictures touched Rita's tongue, teaching her to unroll her r's and pronounce words like salamander and salad without sounding like a wetback" (47). By turning her back on her heritage in order to win fame, she is presented as a traitor to her people who is "too good to fuck lettuce pickers" (45). Plascencia provides this historical re-telling of Hayworth, the untold story of her Latina identity, in order to parallel the betrayal and heartbreak of La Fe and, later, of himself—two different Chicano men suffering from the same feelings of betrayal.

Plascencia performs this same act with the histories of John Smith and Pocahontas and Cortez and La Malinche. In his story of Smith he writes:

Jonathan Smith had come from England to Spanish America to colonize and help plant the seeds of Protestantism, but in his many years in Las Tortugas he never spoke one word against the Pope...In his tenure in the Americas he succeeded in doing only two things: 1) falling in love with a married woman; and 2) luring her away from her husband" (197).

We quickly realize that Plascencia is conflating the two narratives of John Smith coming to America and "stealing" Pocahontas and Jonathan Smith coming and "stealing" Merced. Sprinkling the novel with references to Pocahontas and Smith, Plascencia is re-telling the history of Pocahontas as a traitor to her people for the white man, which he then parallels to the story of La Fe and then himself. Furthermore, by placing this story of colonization and betrayal alongside the Malinche history that I related earlier, Plascencia

is also claiming that both the United States and Latin America possess stories of similar “sadness.” By rewriting the history of John Smith and Pocahontas and then pairing it with the history of Cortez and La Malinche, Plascencia is proclaiming that this history is present in both cultural histories. “Sadness” is not a particular, commodified trope of ethnic or Latina/o literature, but rather it is present within both canonical U.S. and Latina/o texts.

Lastly, Plascencia also tells this story through the history of Napoleon and Marie Louise. Again, rewriting the narratives of known figures, Plascencia revises Napoleon’s history saying, “it was not until Liz left him for a taller lover that he fully understood the little corporal’s compulsion to unsettle worlds and then weep” (113). Napoleon becomes another figure to represent both La Fe and Plascencia, and Plascencia adds even more narrative detail to Napoleon’s historical re-telling as the novel continues:

A diatribe against womanhood: In his final battle, the one he lost, Napoleon used the most predictable of military strategies. He replaced the troops’ rifles with flowers and filled their canteens with Marie Louise’s favorite perfume. They were sent into battle with roses and scented breath, marching over vineyards on the tips of their feet, the initials ML clear to those who looked down at the soldiers from hot-air balloons. Three thousand troops sent to slaughter, their bodies piled high, rotting and pilling ink on her garden. The reinforcements came, their pockets stuffed with chocolate and earrings, and they too perished. The ink of their bodies gathering at the foot of her door, forming letters and introducing a new word to the French lexicon: cunt.

In this instance, the blood shed over Marie Louise literally becomes the ink used to tell Napoleon’s story of heartbreak, using this new word “cunt.” Afterwards, Plascencia gives the perspective of Marie Louise, who researches the etymology of “cunt” only to find numerous citations. Plascencia recounts them in the following list, “in the fall from Eden/cunt. in the story of Sampson/cunt. in the undoing of Val Kilmer in Host/cunt. in the story of Saturn/cunt. in love/cunt. in the fall of civilization/cunts, cunts, cunts, cunts, cunts,

cunts...” (133-134). Tracking the fictional etymology of “cunt,” Plascencia is telling us that stories of sadness are not particular to Latina America, the United States, or both. Instead, this history is tracked throughout the world from creation to the present. Napoleon, who is not just the colonizer of the Americas but a colonizer of the world, symbolizes this shift from a Latina/o narrative, to a U.S. narrative, to an internationally expansive novel that is borderless.

While it might seem that Plascencia is claiming that a history of women being “cunts” is the principal narrative of the world, this extreme example of misogyny is complicated by the novel’s metanarrative which implicates Plascencia as a “colonizer” and the novel’s ending in which Plascencia's loss of control over his narrative and characters is seen as just. About halfway into the novel, Plascencia gives a voice to Liz, Saturn/Plascencia’s own ex-lover, who quite rationally addresses his misogynistic behavior and the unjust first half of the novel:

I was going to stay quiet, let you write your story, let your history as you see it stand. Because I was the unkind one, the reckless one, deserving of whatever you may say. But this is a novel—it is no longer between just you and me. You have involved too many people, brought in too much of the world, and I will not be the villain...But that is what you are doing, turning the readers into lettuce pickers and me into your Rita Hayworth. The sellout, the faithless one, the Malinche, the whore. And you of course are the loyal and kind one, the only one true to Monte. The romantic hero...But Sal, I will not be your Rita Hayworth” (137).

In this closing, Liz summarizes Plascencia’s strategy throughout the whole first half of the novel. She points out his re-appropriation of histories to tell his own narrative and how he has used the various histories of the world to provide a canon or lineage to place his own story within. Through this practice, Plascencia takes his novel outside a canon of Latina/o literature and allows it to read seamlessly alongside other world literatures. However, this solidarity of world literature against Liz points out that, while Latina/o

literature breaks free from a one-dimensional view and gains a nuanced perspective, this same history provides a one-dimensional, un-nuanced view of women. Granting Liz a voice in this instance points out this discrepancy, but it can still be read misogynistically as Liz is only speaking *through* Plascencia—a ventriloquized puppet for his use. However, the second half of the novel will work to portray Plascencia/Saturn as the dictatorial author, and the characters will wage war upon him to end his story. Although the second half of the novel will not entirely eradicate the misogynistic tendencies of the first half, the villainizing of Plascencia through his metanarrative works to complicate this issue and at the very least implicates him for the verbal abuse of Liz and other female characters.

The War Against the Commodification of Sadness

Finally, while the metanarrative of Saturn/Plascencia and Liz functions as a parallel to the other failed romance narratives of history, the true function of the metanarrative is to illustrate how Plascencia's characters, La Fe and the EMF gang, launch a rebellion against Plascencia the author. From the characters' perspectives, Saturn is in control of their fates, and he is purposefully causing misfortune and sadness to plague their lives as a way to find relief from his own heartbreak as well as to make money. Disturbed by this discovered reality, La Fe, Little Merced, and the EMF fight Saturn to keep him from invading their lives, considering it "a war against omniscient narration" (218). They begin fighting Saturn by staying inside, lining their homes with lead (a clever play on the idea of pencil lead), and controlling their thoughts. La Fe's instructions read, "If you must think about something, think about picking roses and carnations, about potatoes, about things that Saturn has no interest in" (89). The plan works for a while, and Saturn has difficulty prying into their lives. Saturn describes their

attempt saying, “Everything they thought of had to do with carnations and farm animals and objects too brown or formless to have any meaning” (90). This aspect of the metanarrative reiterates the fact that Plascencia is not interested in a story of Latina/o farm workers and social reform, as these are details that Saturn “has no interest in.” Playing against this stereotype of Latina/o literature, Plascencia uses this aspect of the metanarrative to tell us that the story does not lie in a realist social justice narrative of immigrants or farmers, but rather in the metanarrative itself—the war against the “colonizing” author.

La Fe, Little Merced, and the EMF gang continue to fight Saturn, even plotting a murder attempt that is left un-pursued. However, as the novel continues, the group develops an allergy to the lead shields and must come up with a new plan. While at first they attempt to shield their thoughts with their own mind power, gang member Froggy comes up with the best solution. His plan is delivered through a rallying speech proclaiming:

We are fighting a war against a story, against a history that is being written by Saturn. We believed that silence was our best weapon against the intrusion of Saturn, that our silence would in turn silence Saturn. But we have discovered an allergy to the lead, and learned that history cannot be fought with sealed lips, that the only way to stop Saturn is through our own voice (209).

Froggy’s war cry perfectly illustrates the allegory Plascencia is attempting to create through his novel and its metanarrative. In order for Latina/o writers to fight the war against “omniscient narration,” “the commodification of sadness,” or the one-dimensional Latina/o narrative, writers must fight with multiple voices rather than with silence. Allowing our story to be told by mainstream perception, generalizations, and stereotypes which label us all as poverty-stricken farmers or gang members is allowing for the market to benefit from our “sadness” and for the “omniscient” mainstream voice

to tell our stories. Plascencia further allegorizes this phenomenon by Saturn saying “The colonize everything: the Americas, our stories, our novels, our memories...” (117). In a sense, this fight against story and this fight for a voice has been occurring since colonization. As a result from history, Latina/os are waging a war against a story in which they are always the colonized, always the victims. Froggy’s solution for multiple voices seems to be the only way to solve this.

As the novel comes to a close, voices begin to crowd the pages—scattered and covering every inch of the page with just room for the margin. This inundation of perspectives and voices grows so loud and cumbersome to read that the narrative itself begins to break down, and Saturn cannot get a word in edgewise. This narrative assault is a worthy effort, and the novel ends with the protagonists “[walking] south and off the page, leaving no footprints that Saturn could track. There would be no sequel to the sadness” (245). Following this final paragraph, in a Joycean fashion, a large black dot remains to represent the characters’ leaving the textual bounds of the novel. After various employed strategies and multiple failed attempts, the characters of *The People of Paper* only succeed by drowning out the voice of their authorial tyrant. Staying silent and doing nothing will not change mainstream media’s portrayal of U.S. Latina/os, and the dangers will not go away by ignoring them. Plascencia urges us let our voice be heard, confident that raising our voices and sharing our stories will be the only way to combat the commodification of our sadness.

Conclusion

Moving forward to the summer of the 2013 National Basketball Association playoffs, a young Sebastian De La Cruz (Figure 2) and successful contestant of television program America's Got Talent was asked to sing the national anthem at Game 3 of the NBA finals between the Miami Heat and the San Antonio Spurs. According to Washington Post writer Colby Itkowitz, "The 11-year-old stood confidently on the court in his full Charro suit with basketball greats like LeBron James watching and belted out 'The Star Spangled Banner.'" However, the result was a backlash of racist attacks and comments from internet outlets such as Twitter, an online riot of people "upset that someone of Mexican descent had been chose to sing America's anthem."²⁰ They accused him of being in the country illegally. They referred to him using ethnic slurs." While in reality De La Cruz is a U.S. citizen, born and raised in San Antonio whose father has served in the U.S. Navy, this did not matter to the public. De La Cruz's Latino body dressed in a traje did not create as transnational space of Latinidad, but rather his foreign-marked body became the site of rejection and ridicule. What could have been taken as a moment for transnational Latinidad or an authentic production of American-Latina/o culture was turned into a moment of violent racism. Why is the idea of transculturation or the concept of a multi-national or transnational America still, to this day, such an impossibility? Why is it that a mariachi-clad body cannot possibly be singing "The Star Spangled Banner?"

²⁰ The San Antonio Spurs organization responded positively toward young De La Cruz and asked him to sing again. Furthermore, De La Cruz was later brought to sing the national anthem at the 2016 Democratic National Convention.

It is evident through this and other popular cultural moments²¹ that we are far from comfortable with accepting a transcultural American story. With societal pressures urging us to view Latina/os as other, foreign, and outside the American historical narrative, it is important that new and diverse narratives of Latinidad are privileged and culturally disseminated. If we continue to embrace this popular perception rather than press against it, not only are we selling our Latina/o histories short, we are causing true harm against Latina/os who are being racially profiled, discriminated against, and forced out of the country. Quiñonez and Plascencia's novels do this work through their compelling stories, innovative literary choices, and direct calls to action. By opening up a space for twenty-first century Latina/os to share their diverse stories as part of an American experience, we can hopefully move forward in accepting not only Latina/o literature as part of a greater and more wonderful American literary canon, but also the Latina/o community as part of greater and more wonderful United States of America.

²¹ Other contemporary anti-Latina/o cultural moments include the Donald Trump's presidential campaign, recent surge in ICE investigations, the removal of Spanish language translations for government websites, the University of Texas Young Conservatives' "Catch an Immigrant Game," and multiple university campus' "Affirmative Action Bake Sales."

Appendix

Figure 1: EMF graffiti tag on bottom of page.



Figure 2: EMF gang sign on section divider.



Figure 3: Sebastian De La Cruz performing the national anthem at NBA finals game in San Antonio.



Bibliography

- “An Interview with Salvador Plascencia.” *Nashville Review*. Vanderbilt University. 1 Apr. 2010. Web. 19 April 2017.
- Barajas, Elías Domínguez. “The Postmodern Ethnic Condition in Ernesto Quiñonez’s Bodega Dreams.” *Latino Studies* 12.1 (2014): 7–26. ProQuest. Web.
- “Catch an Illegal Immigrant Game at UT-Austin Organized by Ex-Abbott Campaign Staffer | Politics.” *Dallas News*. Dallas Morning News, 18 Nov. 2013. Web. 19 Apr. 2017.
- Cisneros, Sandra. *Caramelo*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013. Print.
- Crusade for Justice: El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán. Papers from the Second Annual Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, Denver, March 25-27, 1970. N.p., 1970. Print.
- Cutler, John Alba. *Ends of Assimilation: The Formation of Chicano Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2015. Print.
- Dwyer, June. "When Willie Met Gatsby: The Critical Implications of Ernesto Quiñonez's Bodega Dreams." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2003, pp. 165-178, doi:10.1080/10436920306616.
- Fernandez, Johanna L., and L. Johanna. "Radicals in the late 1960s: A history of the Young Lords Party in New York City, 1969-1974." PhD diss., Columbia University (2004).

“FFF: Hispanic Heritage Month 2016.” *United States Census Bureau*. U.S. Department of Commerce, 12 October 2016. Web. 19 Apr. 2017.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott 1896-1940. *A Life In Letters*. New York: Scribner's, 1994.

Gonzales, Rodolpho, and Yermo Vasquez. *I Am Joaquin*. La Causa Publications, 1967. Print.

Huehls, Mitchum. “The Post-Theory Theory Novel.” *Contemporary Literature* 56.2 (2015): 280–310. cl.uwpress.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu. Web.

Irizarry, Ylce. “Because Place Still Matters: Mapping Puertorriqueñidad in Bodega Dreams.” *Centro Journal* 27.1 (2015): 152. Print.

Itkowitz, Colby. “He Endured Racist Attacks after Singing at NBA Game. Now He’s the Opener for Democratic Debate.” *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 9 Mar. 2016. Web. 19 April 2017.

Jones, Holly Flint. “Dreaming the Nuyorican in Ernesto Quiñonez’s Bodega Dreams: “Representations of Multicultural Citizenship in 21st-Century Latino/a Literature.” *Bilingual Review / La Revista Bilingüe* 31.1 (2012): 30–50. Print.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. U of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.

Manrique, Manuel. *Island in Harlem: A Novel*. Day, 1966. Print.

McGurl, Mark. *The Program Era*. Harvard University Press, 2009. Print.

Nava, Gregory, and Anna Thomas. *El Norte*. Kanopy Streaming, 2014. Film.

Nelson, Emmanuel S. *Ethnic American Literature: An Encyclopedia for Students*. ABC-CLIO, 2015. Print.

Paz, Octavio. *The Labyrinth of Solitude; And, The Other Mexico ; Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude ; Mexico and the United States ; The Philanthropic Ogre*. 1st Grove Press ed., 1st Evergreen ed. New York: Grove Geidenfeld, 1985. Print.

Piñero, Miguel. *La Bodega Sold Dreams*. Arte Público Press, 1980. Print.

Quiñonez, Ernesto. *Bodega Dreams*. Vintage Contemporaries, 2000. Print.

Reyes, Raul A. "Taco Trucks to Bad Hombres: 7 Times Latinos Figured into Trump's Campaign." *NBC News*. NBC, 10 November 2016. Web. 19 Apr. 2017.

Rodríguez, Cristina. "Grounded Transnationalism: Neighborhood Logics in Salvador Plascencia's *The People of Paper*." *Latino Studies*; Basingstoke 13.4 (2015): 481–500. ProQuest. Web.

Saldívar, Ramón. "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Postrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction." *American Literary History* 23.3 (2011): 574–599. Print.

---. "Imagining Cultures: The Transnational Imaginary in Postrace America." *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4.2 (2012): n. pag. escholarship.org. Web. 7 Dec. 2016.

Stavans, Ilan. "Trump, the Wall and the Spanish Language." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 30 Jan. 2017. Web. 19 Apr. 2017.

Tal Kopan. "What Donald Trump Has Said about Mexico." *CNN*. CNN, 31 August 2016. Web. 19 Apr. 2017.

Thomas, Piri. *Down These Mean Streets*. Vintage Books, 1974. Print.

Valdez, Luis. *Actos*. Fresno, Calif: Cucaracha Press, 1971. Print.

---. *Zoot Suit & Other Plays*. Arte Publico Press. Print.

Ybarra-Frausto, Tomás. "Rasquachismo: a Chicano sensibility." *Chicano art: Resistance and affirmation* 1985 (1965): 155-162.