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Southwest Asia

The Transpacific Geographies of Chicana/o Literature

JAYSON GONZALES SAE-SAUE

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Southwest Asia

THE TRANSPACIFIC GEOGRAPHIES OF CHICANA/O LITERATURE

Jayson Gonzales Sae-Saue

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Introduction



The Promise and Problem of Interracial Politics for Chicana/o Culture

But still I wonder . . . I must ask myself what the shouts
of solidarity mean.
—Oscar Zeta Acosta, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*

In the final pages of José Antonio Villarreal's novel *Pocho* (1959), protagonist Richard Rubio walks out of the narrative, leaving unresolved the problems of patriarchy and cultural dislocation that shape the text.[1] Embedded in US social structures of racial difference and divorced from values that once organized life in Mexico, Richard is unable to imagine his bicultural future by the novel's end. Indeed, the narrative's open form postpones indefinitely Richard's cultural transformations, reminding readers that the processes of this Chicano's political emergence will require his looking back to the formative figures of the past, all of whom will influence his identity in the future.

Perhaps this is why the penultimate paragraph of this classic Chicana/o novel details Richard's reflections "of all the beautiful people he had known" (187). In this instance, he recalls one last time his immigrant father, Juan Rubio, whose tragic demise reveals to his American-born son the limitations of Mexican ideals in the United States. Richard proceeds to name other influential figures of his childhood: his mother, a Portuguese poet who challenges his ideologies of human sexuality; a middle-class school girl who motivates him to explore his aesthetic judgments; and "Rooster," the leader of a Pachuco gang who demonstrates acts of political militancy against the Anglo social order. Since these figures will shape his cultural

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and political sensibilities as he matures, it is predictable that Richard should recall them as the narrative concludes. Less expected, however, is that during this crucial moment of self-reflection Richard also commits to memory Thomas Nakano, a Japanese American neighbor about to be sent to a US internment camp.

Despite Thomas's relative invisibility in the narrative, the entry of this Japanese American into Richard's consciousness on the eve of his political emergence gestures provocatively to the underexamined relations between Mexican Americans, Asia, and Asian Americans in early Chicana/o culture. If Juan Rubio symbolizes for his son the destruction of traditional cultural values, then Thomas represents how Richard's emergent political consciousness must negotiate war between the United States and Japan, including the oppression of Japanese Americans.[2] Villarreal writes:

> [Richard and his closest friends] had been so engrossed in the day that *they did not notice that Thomas Nakano had joined them until he spoke.* "I just came to say goodbye, you guys," he said. The boys looked at him shamefacedly. Since the war had begun, they had avoided him tactlessly. He knew their discomfort, and it embarrassed him. "I got nothing to do with the war fellas," he said. "I'm an American just like you guys. I just come to say goodbye, 'cause we gotta go away to a relocation center in a few days, an' I don't know if I'll get to see you guys before I leave."
>
> They all said goodbye, *and somehow the fact that Thomas was to be removed from their lives made it easier to be friends with him* again for a few minutes. . . .
>
> "In a way I'm glad we're going away, 'cause things are getting kinda rough for Japanese people around here. . . .
>
> "These [Anglo] guys jumped me and kicked the piss out of me. I didn't even get to hit even one of them at least, 'cause I wasn't expecting them to beat me up, being I knew them from school and a couple of guys from my old scout troop. They hurt my feelings more than anything else. . . ."
>
> "Jesus Christ!" Richard exclaimed in disgust. This was it! *Now he was getting out!* (181–184, my emphasis)

Here, Richard demonstrates an acute awareness of how local issues of discrimination cut across a spectrum of racial differences, yet he remains uncomfortable with his discovery and his subsequent political actions. In one of the few instances in which he acts as an agent for social change, Richard engages Anglo bigotry directly on behalf of an Asian American boy whose impending removal from their California neighborhood both

disturbs and *gladdens* him. Speaking to this historic moment of internment, George Lipsitz reminds us that many Mexican Americans felt more vulnerable to racist attacks after Japanese American relocation, while the hiring of Mexican American labor to replace internees brought temporary prosperity to many working families like Richard's.[3] In this vein, this proto-Chicano text expresses an ambivalent form of affirmative action against racial intolerance when Richard "gets out" and organizes a group of Mexican Americans to take violent revenge on the Anglo gang responsible for assaulting his Asian American neighbor. Afterward, Richard thought how "it was all wrong. What he had done was as wrong as what they had done to Thomas. It had been like a small battle in a big war, and that war was also wrong" (184–185).

Richard's relationship with Thomas reveals how this important Chicana/o novel anchors an emergent political consciousness—one about to "get out"—in the context of a pivotal trauma of Asian and Asian American history (Japanese American internment). To be sure, Richard's interethnic encounter signals a key moment in his political awakening that exceeds Anglo-Mexican relations, for in this instance his oppositional sensibilities materialize directly from an engagement with *Asian American* oppression. Richard recognizes in this moment that his dilemmas of identity formation are implicated not only within racial tensions between Anglos and Mexican Americans, but also within global conflicts between US Anglos, Asians, and Asian Americans—"like a small battle in a big war."

Politically influential and implicated in armed conflicts in the Pacific Rim, the Asian American figure in Villarreal's novel makes visible what cannot be seen by Chicana/o literary critiques bounded by Anglo-Mexican antagonisms at the US-Mexico border, or contemporary paradigms of hemispheric cultural critique. The textual marginality of this character who lacks representational weight in a narrative that acknowledges having "forgotten Thomas was even there" (178), seemingly justifies the lack of attention critics have invested in the broad racial constellations and transpacific geographies of early Chicana/o culture. Yet as this book will show, what has escaped the critical eye by inhabiting the margins of Chicana/o writings often generates the core political values of many important texts. Indeed, *Pocho* represents just one of numerous texts that illustrate how Asia and Asians inspire this culture's oppositional rhetoric.

Tracing the marginalized presence of Asia and Asians in Chicana/o writings, this book spotlights how these places and figures have repeatedly provoked political awakenings in Chicana/o culture over the last six decades, including during the formative years of its literary renaissance. One of its central arguments is that the pattern of marginalization of Asia and Asians in the Chicana/o literary imagination symbolizes the historical tensions of

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a political culture committed to articulating local community concerns on the one hand, and its consistent engagements with transpacific and interracial issues on the other. It will demonstrate how the oppositional values of Chicana/o texts committed to expressing local social dilemmas regularly emerge from an interest in exploring and imagining the racial dynamics of Pacific Rim politics. To be sure, the consistent yet marginal presence of Asian spaces and bodies in this community's literary imagination signals not their triviality, but rather their troubling and provocative significance in Chicana/o cultural politics.

In a historical context, Laura Pulido has explored the significance of this dynamic between local and internationalist politics in Chicana/o communities. She notes that generations of Mexican American activists have "struggled with the tensions inherent in building an [interracial], antiracist and anticapitalist movement."[4] Her work on the interethnic elements of Chicana/o activism during the 1960s and 1970s, for example, reveals that the Third World Left's interracial and internationalist political ideologies were often mired down in narrow nationalist principles that focused on "questions of identity, [local] community empowerment, antiracism, and [nationalist] culture."[5]

George Mariscal notes a similar tension between Chicana/o cultural nationalist ideologies and global political thinking during the Vietnam War era. Mariscal has shown that narrow cultural nationalisms in particular often functioned as the operating ideology for many Chicana/o political organizations, despite their having formed oppositional political attitudes within interracial and international purviews. Recognizing that the collective identities Chicana/os forged at the local level could not be separated from transnational and interracial political concerns, Mariscal concludes that within Chicana/o activism an ethnicity-based politics emerged as a "necessary precondition" for mobilizing Chicana/o communities.[6] As a result, a contradictory impulse developed alongside the emergence of local and narrow political sensibilities: Chicana/o nationalism, Mariscal notes, "functioned as an organizing tool that could point either to sectarian forms of regressive 'nationalism' or toward coalition building. . . . Chicana/o internationalism [and interracial thinking], then, existed in a complementary and at times conflictive relationship with narrow nationalisms throughout the Viet Nam War period."[7] The collective identities that Chicana/os forged at local levels were not unrelated to the transnational and interracial politics that inspired them, yet they appeared to be so as a result of an ethnicity-based politics that developed as a condition for political mobilization.

When read against the interracial political attitude the Chicano protagonist in Villarreal's novel expresses toward his Japanese American counterpart, the political positions that Pulido and Mariscal highlight

begin to gesture to the ways cross-racial and transnational ambivalence in Chicana/o culture exceed any particular Asian group and transcend any singular episode of US intervention in the Pacific. To this point, this book reveals how Chicana/o writings consistently express political ambivalence concerning interracial and transnational thinking, across both a range of particular Asian groups and during distinct episodes of US aggressions in the Pacific. Further, it spotlights how this ambivalent attitude regenerates itself across regional and historical differences that constitute the various Chicana/o experiences that give shape to Chicana/o culture.

One of the main findings of this book is that the contradictions between nationalist and transnational political thinking—including the tensions between ethno-nationalist and interracial politics that scholars such as Pulido and Mariscal reveal—assume a distinct aesthetic form in Chicana/o writings *before, during, and after* the 1970s. To be sure, Asian political crises—ranging from Japanese internment in the United States to the US imperial war in Vietnam—consistently inspire oppositional political attitudes in Chicana/o communities across the US Southwest. Yet these cross-racial political interests, this book shows, have largely remained marginalized in Chicana/o political writings, and mostly symbolic for Chicana/o social protest. Except for a few instances in this community's labor history, Chicana/os, Asians, and Asian Americans are rarely seen as demonstrating meaningful and sustained cooperation in any single activist struggle.[8] My position is that the consistent appearance of Asia and Asians in Chicana/o literature speaks to a prolonged interest in political crises across the Pacific Rim, and that their marginalization speaks symbolically to how Chicana/o communities perceived the risks of casting their political focus across ethnic differences, and across the globe.

From this vantage point, the regular yet peripheral appearances of Asia and Asians in Chicana/o writings not only highlight a pattern of ethnicity-based forms of political emergence, but also gesture toward extra-literary matters of transnational inspiration across distinct Pacific Rim crises that are hardly recognizable within any given text's representative architecture. For example, famed Chicana/o poet Alurista rarely inserts Asia and Asians into the innovative semantic systems he developed during the 1970s in order to articulate his ethno-cultural themes, including his notions of Aztlán as the spiritual homeland of Chicana/os.[9] Nonetheless, Alurista has spoken in unambiguous terms about the significance of Asia in his work, and in Chicana/o poetic production more generally. For example, during his participation in a high-profile panel at the 1983 annual meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Alurista presented a talk entitled, "Ideology and Aesthetics in the Meaning of Chicana/o Poetics, 1965–1975."[10] On this occasion, Alurista makes clear how interracial and

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international contexts generate the ethno-cultural poetics in his work and in the poetry of some of the major writers of his generation: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, José Montoya, Abelardo Delgado, and Sergio Elizondo. Reflecting on a decade of Chicana/o poetic production, Alurista concludes that "the American War in Viet Nam, a paradigmatic example of America's transnational militarism, *establishes the conditions* for Chicana/o literary production and its *processes* of poetic signification."[11] According to the unofficial poet laureate of Aztlán, the American War in Vietnam conditions the *very possibilities* for Chicana/o poetic invention between 1965 and 1975. This undermines interpretative practices that view the literary work of this era exclusively through a nationalist lens, or even through a hemispheric vantage point of Latin American internationalism.

To be fair, skeptics may charge that Alurista overstates the case of Vietnam's centrality in Chicana/o aesthetic production. His affirmations regarding its significance in the works of the Chicana/o poets for whom he speaks are certainly speculation. For example, it is far more likely that for José Montoya—a veteran of the Korean War—this conflict, and *not* the American War in Vietnam, "establishes the conditions" for personal literary innovation. One needs only to recall how Montoya's seminal work "El Louie" (1969) tracks a Chicano's social demise after his return from the Korean peninsula.[12] This poem highlights poignantly the shortcomings of US democracy as suffered by Chicano soldiers and their communities.[13]

Still, Alurista's claims regarding the influence of Vietnam on Chicana/o poetics highlight an underexamined dynamic concerning circumpacific political thinking and the influence of Asian political spaces on Chicana/o culture. At the very least, his declarations about the American War in Vietnam speak powerfully to a contradiction hardly acknowledged in Chicana/o ethno-national poetics: his literary constructions of "Aztlán" read both as a potent nationalist symbol *and* as an imaginary transnational political space whose poetic invention is born from Asian inspiration. To bring this point to bear, Alurista concludes his 1983 talk by conceptualizing Aztlán as a political territory that references a particular history of Anglo-American imperial expansion and as a cultural geography without racial or national frontiers, declaring that the Chicana/o "word, sign, metaphor, and glyph refuse . . . to be servile to others. We are Aztlán without borders."[14]

Identifying US military aggressions in Southeast Asia as a precondition for Chicana/o processes of poetic signification—which themselves bear only faint traces of Asia or its constituents—Alurista speaks to a glaring paradox in Chicana/o cultural practices: the vehement objection to US imperial violence against Asians, and the simultaneous subordination of the Asian presence in this community's literary imagination. Like Richard in Villarreal's *Pocho*, Asians and Asia remain peripheral elements in

Chicana/o narratives across the last half of the twentieth century, despite their having played a constitutive role in the oppositional politics in the imaginations of many Chicana/o writers. This dialectic between the narrow ethnic values at the core of much of Chicana/o literature, and the repeated delimitation of Asians and Asia within the poetic structures of this community's cultural products, shapes much of this study.

Of course, it is difficult to address this narrative configuration between ethno-cultural centrality and Asian marginality in the context of a monolithic Chicana/o political culture. Chicana/o literature—like the Chicana/o Movement itself—is diffuse, often divided by regional, gendered, and classed issues that make it difficult to speak of a unified or fully coherent cultural practice. To this point, Ignacio García argues that "the Chicano Movement was not so much a singular social process as much as a coalescing of numerous philosophical, [cultural], and historical currents within the community that came together at a particular time and place."[15] Certainly, the multiple ideologies of the Chicana/o Movement make it tricky to characterize as constituting any single political or poetic agenda, either across institutions or between its major cultural figures, many of whom I examine here and who claim their origins across the US Southwest. However, I submit that this lack of coherence is not unrelated to the contradictory forces at play in Chicano/o political and cultural practices, which oftentimes oscillate between narrow ethno-nationalist thinking and its consistent international and interracial considerations, particularly with respect to Asia and Asians. To bring this point to bear, I briefly analyze the polemical yet widely popular Chicano writer Oscar Zeta Acosta.

Acosta's *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972) and its sequel, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973), both fictionalize moments of interracial and transnational Chicana/o political efforts. The latter text in particular, which imagines the Chicana/o Movement in California, depicts several instances of interracial solidarity during large-scale protests of the American War in Vietnam. In one memorable scene, Buffalo Brown (the protagonist and the author's alter ego) joins an ethnically diverse lineup of speakers at the University of California, Los Angeles. Their goal is to rally against US encroachments into Cambodia by raising awareness about the escalation of the Vietnam War. The narrative describes the events at the rally, including the speeches given by activists Angela Davis and Rudolfo Corky Gonzales. Acosta writes:

> Corky Gonzales is to be on the program. And so is Angela Davis, the black professor who only recently was kicked off campus by Governor Reagan's Board of Regents. I [Brown], too, have been invited to speak. The crowd rumbles with anticipation. . . .

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A tall kid with a bushy beard comes to the mike. "Ladies and gentlemen . . . our first speaker is Angela Davis."

Roar Roar Roar. Stomp, clap, stomp, clap. Power to the people!

The lithe slow figure of the black beauty comes to the stage. She is the heroine of the day. She has told the world that she is a member of the Lamumba Club, a communist and an intellectual. The students and professors love her.

"We are here to protest the slaughter of the students at Kent State. . . . We are here to join hands to fight against the warmongers. . . . We are here to tell Richard Nixon that he can't continue to bomb and kill the poor yellow brothers and sisters in Vietnam, in Cambodia . . . or [to shoot students at] Kent State!

"Now, what we've got to understand, what we've got to see, is that the war in Vietnam, just like the war at Kent State, both are products of the *system* in this country." (176)

The inclusion of a black activist voice in this highly influential Chicana/o novel exemplifies, like Thomas in *Pocho*, how the peripheral position of a minority character classifies a spectrum of ethnic difference in this culture's oppositional imagination. And like *Pocho*, the narrative here resists exploring the material relations between Chicana/os and other minority groups, including the individual qualities of their lives. Indeed, *Pocho* never explores Thomas's interiority to the degree of providing an image of his singular consciousness, nor does it explore the historical complexity of Japanese internment. In this instance, Angela Davis—a figure whose political ideas match the intensity of Acosta's—is similarly introduced exclusively through her overdetermined exteriority, and through a flattened brand of oppositional values. She walks into the novel highlighted as "the lithe slow figure" and walks out having expressed only a *generic* revolutionary sentiment that never surveys the historical contours of Black Nationalism, or the complexities of the ongoing war killing "yellow brothers and sisters in Vietnam, in Cambodia." If Thomas in *Pocho* represents an implied experience of Asian American discrimination in relation to Chicana/o injustice, then Angela Davis's one-dimensional representation in *Revolt* also serves as an allegory for the *ideas* of black oppression and of the growing colonial war in Southeast Asia.

The flatness of this African American character, and of the "yellow brothers and sisters" in Asia whom the novel never dedicates narrative energy in rounding out, generates important questions regarding their role in the narrative's political rhetoric. *Revolt* makes clear that its narrative must pay attention to the oppression of other minority groups and to the war in Vietnam because they are implicated in Chicana/o political development. The figure of Angela Davis serves this function almost exclusively

when she expresses, "Now, what we've got to understand, what we've got to see, is that the war in Vietnam, just like the war at Kent State, both are products of the *system* in this country." The narrative makes it clear that this "system" is one that oppresses whites, blacks, Asians, Asian Americans, *and* Chicana/os.

Still, the narrative's representation of Angela Davis as what E. M. Forster has popularly conceptualized as a "flat character," and the text's transitory reference to "yellow brothers and sisters in Vietnam," challenge the novel's focus on Chicana/o political concerns that constitute its thematic core.[16] Casting a dilated gaze between distinct racial populations and peeking into Southeast Asian politics, this foundational Chicana/o novel, like *Pocho*, inevitably runs the risk of having its story of Mexican American self-determination destabilized by non-Chicana/o figures and Asian territories. Indeed, Angela Davis's prompt disappearance from *Revolt*, and the novel's complete erasure of the "yellow brothers and sisters" in Asia, open up the narrative space to voice local Chicana/o concerns once Corky Gonzales and Buffalo Brown take to the stage. The narrative itself thus functions as a double for the physical stage at the protest rally, with each ethnic figure vying for space in order to voice its community's respective political needs. This point is brought to bear once Corky Gonzales speaks. He says:

And thank you, Angela. We are with you in your fight against Reagan, sister. . . .

Now I am as angered as you over the deaths of four students. . . . But where is Kent State? . . . Let me tell you something. We teach our people . . . to become involved in *local* issues. . . . We are just as much against the war as anyone. In fact, we have greater reasons for hating this war. Our people, the Chicanos, are being killed at twice our rate in the population. . . . Of course we are against the war. . . . But we've got to take care of business at home first. . . .

Now I'm told that you had a mini-riot on the campus yesterday. . . . They tell me that the Chicano students were holding a *Cinco de Mayo* celebration at Campbell Hall and that the pigs came in and busted some heads. Young boys and girls were clubbed down to the ground right here. . . .

So I would only add that you should get involved with the struggles in your own backyard . . . not just on the campus, but in the barrios, in the ghettos, wherever you find the forces of reaction working against the people. (177–178)

Here, the text represents radical poet and activist Corky Gonzales recalibrating the oppositional politics of the narrative away from the American

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War in Vietnam (which constitutes the very premise of the protest rally). Instead, he directs his concerns toward local community issues in the barrios of Los Angeles. Having removed Angela Davis from the stage and "the yellow brothers and sisters" in Asia from its narrative interests, *Revolt* ultimately concludes this rally by prioritizing a political focus on "local struggles" and then aligning Corky's and Buffalo Brown's oppositional attentions. Ultimately, Corky's political message falls perfectly in line with the narrative's larger oppositional rhetoric, which is directed at Chicana/o issues of police brutality, educational discrimination, cultural eradication, and other afflictions plaguing the community. For this reason, Corky's brief appearance in the novel is very much unlike Davis's. The narrative does not circumscribe his interiority as he departs from the novel, so much as reinforce the local Chicana/o sensibilities that constitute the foundation of the text's political architecture. In other words, instead of representative flatness, Corky's appearance metonymically represents a central Chicana/o consciousness at the core of the text itself. This consciousness, unequivocally oppositional and resolutely committed to local (and oftentimes ethnic nationalist) political issues, is ultimately singularized in the figure of Buffalo Brown. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that Brown functions as an echo to Corky on matters of local injustice once he finally takes to the stage:

> I have come to join in protest against the war [in Vietnam]. I have come to meet with you to add my words of sorrow for the kids shot down at Kent State yesterday. . . . But more than that, I have just come to ask you to join in the support of local issues. Just like Corky said . . . you know . . . death is not uncommon to us. We Chicanos have been beat up, shot up, kicked around, spat on and . . . fuck, they've taken everything we've had. . . . Death at the hands of the pigs is nothing new to us. . . .
>
> *But still I wonder . . . I must ask myself what the shouts of solidarity mean.* (179, my emphasis)

Concluding Brown's speech by emphasizing local political action and delimiting interracial concerns, this text's aesthetic arrangement calls into question its own commitment to cross-racial and transnational politics. Before a largely white and middle-class audience, Brown expresses doubts regarding student solidarity once "the fires start up"; he publicly poses a query regarding the significance of the crowd's "shouts of solidarity." However, the narrative's lack of dedication to fleshing out its non-Chicana/o figures and to rounding out the social content of the American War in Vietnam—which is the very premise of the rally—call into question the

novel's own commitment to solidarity and to protesting the war in Southeast Asia. Indeed, the lack of representative weight given to the individuated politics of non-Chicana/os and to Asia highlights how interracial and transnational dilemmas set the stage (literally) for mobilizing Chicana/o protest. Yet this text also demonstrates how the war in Asia simultaneously threatens to derail the narrative's political emphasis away from what Corky and Brown identify as more pressing issues in the community. In this regard, the politics of the narrative's arrangement—in which Chicana/os compete with other minorities for articulating their respective community concerns—recasts Brown's rhetorical query away from the rally's student population and toward the novel's own composition: What do these *representations* of transnational political thinking mean?

Acosta's aesthetic arrangement is one of many examples in Chicana/o literature that symbolizes the contradiction between interracial solidarity, transpacific thinking, and narrow ethnocentric narrative formations. Indeed, the text's representation of the student protests at UCLA shows how the conflict between local and circumpacific politics often emerges in the context of solidarity efforts, yet with various degrees of separatism. Unsurprisingly, this incongruity between political alignments and oppositional foci not only manifests itself in the narrative structures of Chicana/o writings, but also in the public speech-acts of its cultural brokers.

For example, whereas Acosta's novel symbolically imagines solidarity between minorities during an antiwar rally in 1970, the author made less-than-enthusiastic gestures toward bridging interethnic differences during that same year. On May 28, 1970, at an assembly sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Community Coalition in Los Angeles, Acosta joined Reverend Jesse Jackson and a group of Asian students to condemn US policies in Vietnam as "fascist and imperialistic."[17] On this day, Jackson accused the US government of "racist and oppressive policies," ending his speech with a quote from the *Declaration of Independence* that calls for regime change, saying, "It is their right [the people's], it is their duty, to throw off such government and provide new guards for their future security."

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which kept a file on Acosta during the 1970s, the novelist concurred with Jackson's sentiments regarding the repressive nature of the United States and the need for a new government. Yet Acosta differed significantly with his civil rights colleague on matters of interethnic unity. Unapologetically, Acosta damned the United States for being historically responsible for the oppressive conditions of Mexican Americans, but he ended his speech by driving a sharp wedge through the interracial coalition the rally appeared to showcase. According to the FBI, Acosta called for "unity among minority races" but stated that

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all racial groups, including Asians and blacks, "would have to accede to the territorial demands of the Mexican Americans" once Chicana/os realized the national formation of Aztlán. In other words, Acosta expressed support for interethnic coalitions, yet he concluded that all other racial minorities would remain subordinate—if not excluded from the Chicana/o nation-state entirely—after Chicana/os reclaimed their territorial rights.

This rally on the steps of the Los Angeles City Hall and the protest in Acosta's novel both demonstrate ambivalence toward Chicana/o efforts at interracial cooperation during the height of the Chicana/o Movement. Brian Behnken has shown that more opportunities for cooperation between Chicana/os and other racial groups existed during the Vietnam War era than in other periods of US history. However, Behnken concludes that in this period minorities often came to regard each other as competitors for political power and limited institutional resources.[18]

Yet access to resources was not always the primary impediment to solidarity. The spatial grounding of Acosta's and other Chicana/os' political appeals according to the political geography of Aztlán (US Southwest) oftentimes generated explicit denials of competing ethnic claims in the region. On the steps of Los Angeles City Hall, for example, Acosta's deployment of Aztlán as the Chicana/os' future nation-state undermined any logic of interethnic solidarity. Indeed, "Aztlán," when interpreted literally as a territorial signifier, is incongruous with the language and strategies of other US ethnic groups, including Asian Americans, African Americans, and Native Americans, for whom the US Southwest was never imagined to be a future Chicana/o state. In its nationalist modality, then, the Chicana/os' spatially grounded politics required that the community delimit its relationships with other aggrieved minority groups and demarcate ideological and territorial boundaries around competing civil rights claims, including those of indigenous groups living on reservation lands across the US Southwest.

As such, Acosta's remarks reveal how Aztlán sometimes functioned literally in Chicana/o political rhetoric, less as a means to foster real-world alliances and more as a strategy to establish claims of territorial origins. Indeed, Acosta's collaboration with Jesse Jackson, and his remarks on the need for Asians and blacks (as well as, presumably, all other minorities) to abandon the US Southwest, illustrate an instance in which Chicana/os relied on separatist appeals for redress, despite their having cooperated with other ethnic leaders in the community. Political pleas for access to limited resources—and more radical appeals for territorial sovereignty—all resulted in the subordination of cross-racial and transnational elements of Chicana/o political speech.

This give-and-take dynamic of jockeying for political power during the 1970s did not exist between Chicana/os and Vietnamese, however. Clearly,

the latter were fighting a bloody yet politically successful war far from US borders, instead of jousting for limited resources and claims of indigeneity within them. For this reason, Chicana/o claims of solidarity with Vietnamese peasants would not only be inspirational or contextual—such as in Alurista's declaration that the US war against this population had established the conditions for Chicana/o poetic production. Instead, assertions of Chicana/o alliances with Vietnamese peasants—and more radical appeals for an "Aztlán without borders" that extends into Asia—could only be symbolic, as a result of the distinct sociospatial experiences of Chicana/os and Vietnamese living on *opposite* sides of the Pacific.

Given the lack of contact and rivalry, the Vietnamese revolutionary, itself coded with high symbolic value, provided Chicana/os with an ideal image for communicating the intensity of the Mexican American's political resistance without the threat of competition. This partly explains why Chicana/o culture so often makes gestures toward interracial solidarity with this Asian group, despite Chicana/os and Vietnamese revolutionaries having *never* done so throughout their political histories. To be sure, many Chicana/os imagined the political semblances between their struggles at home and those in Southeast Asia as similar battles for freedom and national sovereignty. In extreme instances, Chicana/o culture considered these struggles as not just similar, *but rather as the same fight* for freedom in and of itself.

As a result, Chicana/o culture oftentimes imagined local oppositional heroes in the image of Vietnamese freedom fighters who were determined to defeat, against all odds, violent US forces. For example, a 1973 issue of *Los Más Cabrones*, a popular Chicana/o art magazine of the era, included a full back-page portrait of Vietnamese revolutionary Ho Chi Minh to inspire local political resistance (see figure 1). Below the profile of the Vietnamese leader reads "Los Agresores Yanquis Fracasaron" (The Yankee Aggressors Failed), reminding local Spanish-speaking readers how dedication to revolutionary ideals can defeat powerful US institutions that oppress both Chicana/os *and* Asians. Clearly, the portrait of Ho Chi Minh serves to arouse Chicana/o revolutionary sentiments. Yet it also calibrates the community's struggles as both similar to and related to those of Asian peasants suffering US imperialist aggressions half a world away.

Malaquías Montoya's painting *Viet Nam Aztlán* (1973) offers another example of cultural efforts to imagine Chicana/o protestors in the image of Southeast Asian freedom fighters, unambiguously illustrating cultural efforts to conflate oppositional politics across the Pacific (see figure 2). This painting depicts a profile of a Viet Cong soldier that is slightly refracted behind a silhouette of an urban Chicano protestor. Above their heads reads "Doàn Kêt Chiên Thắńg/UNIDOS VENCERAN." Both translate

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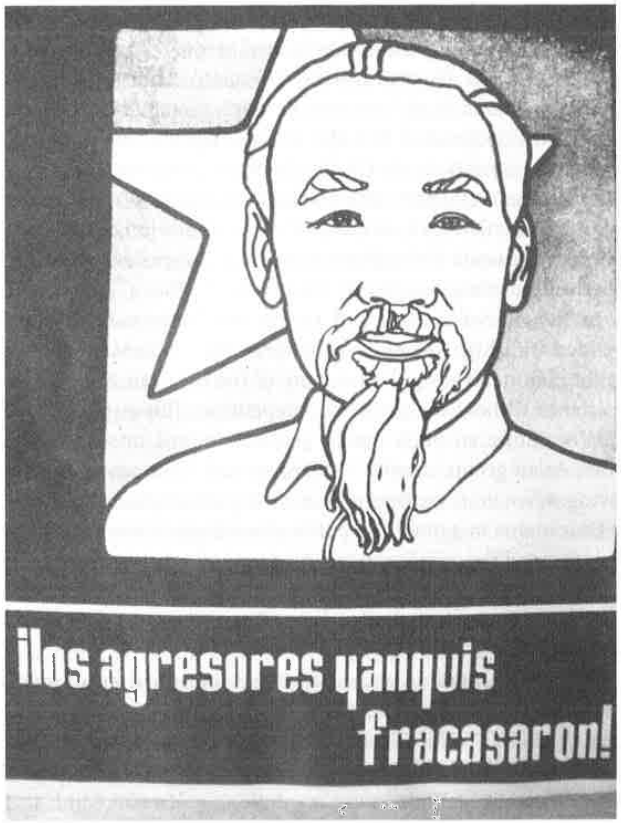


Fig. 1. "The Yankee Aggressors Failed!" Back page of Chicana/o street magazine, *Los Más Cabrones* 1:2 (February 1973).

loosely as "united they will overcome," signaling an idyllic desire for solidarity between Chicana/o and Vietnamese populations. Indeed, for many Chicana/o artists and political brokers of the era, the new image of a politically attuned Mexican American was nothing less than the romantic abstraction of itself as an Asian double, one fighting similar battles for democratic freedoms six thousand miles away—and with whom it would never form a direct political alliance.

Despite the consistent production of the Vietnamese as a political double, another image of identity emerged in Chicana/o culture during this period, and more popularly so: the Aztec Indian. During the 1970s, widespread formulations of Chicana/o identity imbued with indigenous cultural pride



Fig. 2. Malaquías Montoya, *Viet Nam Aztlán*, 1972. Offset lithograph, 26 x 19 1/8 in. Courtesy of Malaquías Montoya.

challenged the viability of regarding the Vietnamese peasant as a political twin. Furthermore, the overwhelming insistence on establishing a cultural continuum between contemporary Chicana/os and Mesoamericans of the precolonial era often curtailed efforts of imagining regional struggles as local inflections of the war in Southeast Asia. Mariscal brings this point to bear, noting that "with few exceptions, the journals, newspapers, and literary magazines published by the Chicano Movement in the late 1960s and early '70s [began to make] infrequent references to the war [in Vietnam]. . . . In more radical publications, the occasional poem or public opinion survey was embedded among commentary on what were considered to be the more pressing issues of ethnic origins (e.g., Mexican and pre-Columbian culture)."[19]

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Chicana/o culture's romantic constructions of its racial lineages often framed the discourses of Aztlán and US colonialism exclusively around the US Southwest according to a logic of neo-indigenismo, which not only idealized native roots, but also delimited the transpacific orientations of many Chicana/o writers and artists. To be sure, this paradigm shift gave strength to the nationalist values that reached their apex during the 1970s, romantically connecting Chicana/os to precolonial populations in order to stress ideas about territorial indigeneity and bring into focus local political matters instead of attending to transnational concerns, particularly in Asia. This issue is perhaps best encapsulated by the two most popular mantras of the Vietnam War era, "*La Guerra Está Aquí, en Aztlán*" (The War Is Here, in Aztlán) and "*Mi Raza Primero*" (My People First). The latter of these, according to Ernesto Chávez, became the unofficial slogan for the Chicana/o Movement generally,[20] and it helped inscribe its participants into a distinct ethnic group imagined to have directly descended from indigenous populations. The slogan "Mi Raza Primero" epitomizes a popular desire to shift Chicana/o political concerns away from extra-ethnic and transnational matters and toward local community issues (see figure 3). In this sense, its consistent cry at marches protesting the American War in Vietnam sharply intone a dilemma between divergent ideologies: one that prioritizes "my people first," in which the community self-fashions itself according to romantic fantasies of Mesoamerican genealogies, and another



Fig. 3. "Our Fight Is at Home"/"Mi Raza Primero." Antiwar march, Seattle, Washington, ca. 1971. Courtesy of Antonio Salazar/Chula Vista Foto.

that privileges third world concerns in Asia, in which the community self-fashions itself according to romantic abstractions of Asian revolutionaries.

The following chapters identify and then examine this ideological two-step between the "barrio" and Asia in the aesthetic architecture of key Chicana/o texts. The Chicana/o literary imagination has long cast a broad narrative gaze across an interracial political landscape, one that far exceeds Chicana/o communities and frequently peers into Asia well before the American War in Vietnam. Yet the lack of depth and detail these texts often afford non-Chicana/o figures and Asian spaces calls attention to the gap between their one-dimensional narrative depictions and their material historical referents, raising fundamental questions about the ways in which interracial and transnational matters impact the politics of representation in Chicana/o culture. What is the ideological function of Asia and Asians in the oppositional (and sometimes reactionary) cultural politics that important Chicana/o texts formulate? How do representations of the Pacific Rim contribute to the ways Chicana/o writings articulate social, cultural, and political issues in Mexican American communities? What does the dialectical configuration between Chicana/os and Asians in Chicana/o art yield for understanding the political emergence of Chicana/o cultural values, including their nationalist, gendered, and classed formations?

These questions form the core of this entire study. It justifies its particular focus on Chicana/o-Asian relations by demonstrating how Chicana/o communities configure self-perceptions outside the hemisphere and in relation to an Asian other against which the United States has pitted Mexican Americans during times of war throughout the twentieth century. This project becomes more urgent when we recall that a large number of important Chicano writers served in US military efforts across the Pacific, including World War II, the US occupation of Japan, the Korean War, and the American War in Vietnam. This book attends to writings by many Chicano veterans of these conflicts, including Américo Paredes (US Occupation of Japan), Rolando Hinojosa (Korean War), and Alfredo Véa and Daniel Cano (American War in Vietnam), as well as others. Indeed, the long history of Mexican American soldiering in US wars throughout the Pacific Rim (and the large Asian population in the US West) reveal why Asian characters appear so frequently in Chicana/o narratives, especially in male-authored texts. The political urgency to speak to local community issues and to comment on racial injustice in the US West without extra-ethnic and geopolitical distractions, I shall show, explains their consistent textual marginalization.

This is not to suggest that Chicana/o literature privileges Chicana/o-Asian relations as more progressive or significant than other forms of interracial contact. Nor does it suggest that Chicana/o-Asian encounters are representative of cross-racial dynamics in Chicana/o literature more

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generally. Instead, this study will show that Asia and Asians factor significantly into the ideological production of writings by many key Chicana/o authors, whose works often form the core of this community's literary canon. It is a dynamic that remains to be fully explored by literary scholars, despite a long genealogy of historians having already uncovered the importance of Asian wars in the political pasts of many Chicana/o communities. For example, Mario García, George Sánchez, David Gutiérrez, Lorena Oropeza, and Richard Griswold del Castillo, among others, have shown how World War II, the Korean War, and the American War in Vietnam each represent significant moments in Chicana/o political history.[21] These scholars have revealed how Mexican American participation in these conflicts has contributed significantly to the political and cultural becoming of many Chicana/o communities, marked by their involvement in labor movements, their rise into the middle class through access to the US GI Bill, and their insertion into a class of professional artists.

Only a handful of literary scholars, however, have examined at length the impact of these conflicts on Chicana/o literary themes, and even fewer have regarded the influence of Asia and Asians on—to use Alurista's phrasing—"its processes of poetic signification." There exists no book-length study on these literary matters; much important work remains to be done regarding the underexplored impact of Asia and Asians on the themes and aesthetic features of key Chicana/o texts before, during, and after the 1970s.[22] This book addresses this gap in the cultural and critical past of Chicana/o communities, and in doing so it establishes an alternative literary history anchored not only at the US-Mexico border, but also across the Pacific Rim.

Chapter 1 begins this study by asserting that key texts of the Chicana/o literary renaissance collapse Chicana/o and Asian identities and flatten geographical differences between the United States and Asia, thereby linking economic and social injustices in the West to US military aggressions in Vietnam. Examining Oscar Zeta Acosta's novel about the Chicana/o moratorium, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973), Luis Valdez's anti-war play, *Vietnam Campesino* (1971), and Miguel Méndez's experimental text, *Peregrinos en Aztlán* (1974), this opening chapter uncovers narrative forms of racial conflation that problematically imagine Chicana/os and Vietnamese as, in the words of Valdez, "the same people." This chapter also maps the narrative terrains of these texts, which layer US geographies over those of Asia. It identifies this spatial feature as a cultural strategy by which to calibrate US colonial violence in Vietnam as an image of local struggles for ethnic autonomy in the US West.

Because these texts instill cultural pride by maintaining that the US West and Southwest is Aztlán, the home of the Aztec Indians, they consider Chicana/os not as newcomers, but as peoples indigenous to the land. In its separatist modality, however, this conceptualization of territorial space delimits the potential for interracial solidarity across other racial spectrums, for Aztlán has often come to represent "the name of that place that will at some future point be the national home of a Chicano people reclaiming their territorial rights."[23] In this sense, chapter 1 shows that the transnational figurations of Aztlán in Acosta's, Valdez's, and Mendez's texts decouple this nationalist space away from the local, thus representing more than a future nation-state, or "the land taken by the United States in [the] nineteenth century."[24] Instead, this chapter shows that the poetic process of collapsing racial and spatial difference in these texts conceptualizes Aztlán as an expansive political territory that extends *across the Pacific Rim*, revealing how this key word of the Chicana/o cultural lexicon symbolizes not only a particular history of Anglo-American imperial expansion, but also a larger and more general history of US aggressions in Asia.

Having unpacked the narrative features that encapsulate the contradictions between nationalist and transpacific political ideas in Acosta's, Mendez's, and Valdez's texts, and having plotted them as part of a larger history of the tension between ethnocentric and transnational orientations in Chicana/o culture, I continue in chapter 2 with an examination of Américo Paredes's "Ichiro Kikuchi" (1948–1949) and Rolando Hinojosa's *Korean Love Songs* (1978). This chapter identifies these key exemplars of Chicana/o literature as cultural forms that construct oppositional identities in the image of Asians *before* the American War in Vietnam. In an era in which large numbers of Mexican American soldiers testify to having had imagined themselves as legitimate members of the US nation-state, these narratives reveal how early wars in Japan and Korea conditioned alternative forms of self-identification fashioned in the image of an Asian other. As Mexican Americans fitted in the uniform of US power that exerts itself relentlessly against Asians overseas, yet also as minorities who recognize their subjugation to that power at home, the protagonists of Paredes's and Hinojosa's texts express what Homi Bhabha calls in a different yet related context, the "jagged testimony" of the subaltern.[25] The interracial associations these texts establish cut against the grain of historiographies that equate Mexican American soldiering during the mid-twentieth century with self-perceptions of their having become "common members" of US society. Instead, Paredes's and Hinojosa's narratives, I show, challenge histories that write this community's inclusion in the US democratic project by calling attention to the imagined racial and political equivalences between Chicana/os and Asians fighting on opposite sides of the same wars.

Representations of Asia and Asians in these texts illustrate how transnational and interracial thinking drive the oppositional politics of Chicana/o

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culture before the American War in Vietnam. Yet Paredes's and Hinojosa's narratives also represent early instances of Chicana/o ambivalence about Asian encounters in this community's literary culture. While these texts communicate early instances of Chicana/o self-determination in a Pacific Rim context, how they marginalize their Asian characters in their respective stories symbolizes this culture's ideological conflicts between local and global priorities. As such, this chapter argues that the narrative deletions of Asians in Paredes's and Hinojosa's texts project a future political culture, one compelled to demarcate racial boundaries around its community interests as a "tactical decision in order to organize [its] constituencies."[26]

Chapter 3 proceeds to demonstrate within frameworks of gender and colonialism that Asian encounters in the Chicana/o literature do not always produce progressive political responses. Navigating the interstices of race, gender, and nationalism, this chapter examines the representations of interracial sex in Daniel Cano's *Shifting Loyalties* (1995) and Alfredo Véa's *Gods Go Begging* (1999). In doing so, it reveals how Chicana/o-Asian relations in these instances reproduce US imperial ideologies that Chicana/o culture has long opposed. This chapter identifies reactionary politics in the sexual encounters between Chicano men and Asian women in these works by regarding them in the context of Edward Said's concern that subaltern populations will eventually adopt the "orientalizing processes of domination" developed by colonial powers, despite their own experiences of subjugation.[27] Read against the explicit anti-imperialist politics that thematize Cano's and Véa's novels, this chapter argues that their depictions of interracial liaisons deconstruct their anti-hegemonic values, for the Chicano's conquest of the female Asian body stands metonymically for the US colonial actions that these texts seemingly stand to critique.

This chapter on interracial liaisons dovetails with chapter 4, which focuses on Chicana/o Orientalisms in Rudolfo Anaya's *A Chicano in China* (1986). This text contains the romantic features of imagined racial symmetries between Chicana/os and Asians highlighted throughout the book. However, this narrative departs from a context of US-Asian conflict to explore theories of prehistoric migrations from Asia to the Americas.[28] In order to undercut the European roots of Chicana/o culture, Anaya's text constructs a myth of shared origins between Chicana/os and Chinese during the narrator's voyage across the Pacific Ocean. Situating Anaya's travelogue alongside the counter-colonial poetics of Mexican poet Octavio Paz, who regarded Asian influences on pre-Columbian culture in order to deemphasize Mexico's European past, I argue that Anaya's text attempts to affirm the Chicana/o's indigenous origins by participating in a cultural project developed south of the US-Mexico border, one which—according to Paz—verifies that "American man is of Asiatic origin."[29]

Insisting on discovering a precolonial seed of Chicana/o culture, Anaya's narrator travels from the Americas to China in search of common legends between Chicana/os and ancient Chinese, ones he believes will unearth a hidden kernel of Mesoamerican knowledge. En route, I argue, he internalizes constructions of the "Orient" not as other, but rather as a foundational self, insisting on theories of Asian origins for Amerindian populations and thereby quickly confirming assumptions of the Chicana/o's Asian heritage. To this point, this chapter shows that Anaya's text not only mirrors the efforts of Mexican writers who obsessed over theories of early Asian migrations to the Americas, but also that it resembles the efforts of Chicana/o nationalists of the 1970s who insisted on a cultural continuum between contemporary Mexican Americans and Mesoamericans of a precolonial era. It is here, this chapter reveals, where the contradictions of Chicana/o cultural ideologies on Asia come full circle: while cultural nationalists of the 1970s marginalized ideas of Chicana/o and Asian sameness in order to romanticize Chicana/o indigenous heritage, *A Chicano in China* insists on transpacific equivalences in order to fantasize about this *same* Native American lineage.

Chapter 5 reintroduces the impact of gender on Chicana/o-Asian relations by examining Virginia Grise's *Rasgos asiáticos* (*Asian Traits*, 2011). This play reminds us that Chicana/o-Asian encounters occur not just overseas, but also within the formative history of Chinese immigration to the US-Mexico borderlands. This chapter expands the underexamined history of Chinese immigration and persecution in northern Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century to assess the racial and gendered values of Grise's play. To be sure, this history forms the backdrop of Grise's drama about mixed-race marriages of the era, and it forms the material basis for how this drama articulates life as a lesbian Chinese-Chicana a century later.

To begin, this chapter argues that the play's geographical and temporal movements between the Americas and Asia function differently from earlier strategies of spatial flattening in 1970s Chicana/o culture. It shows how the play's intergenerational conversations between the US-Mexico border and Asia refuse to collapse distinct geographies into an undifferentiated political landscape of "sameness," thereby yielding ideological concepts very different from the romantic forms of interracial solidarity examined in chapters 1 and 2. Refusing to collapse racial and territorial distinctions for purposes of political convenience, *Rasgos* instead produces its ideologies of identity by negotiating the gaps of a community's fractured past, including the oft-forgotten history of Chinese migrants in the US-Mexico borderlands. These temporal gaps and historical ambiguities, this chapter shows, are marked by this drama's dominant formal features, all of which condition the possibilities of articulating its mixed-race feminist politics.

The play's irregular distribution of empty and dark spaces marks its transpacific and intergenerational movements; its linguistic combinations of Spanish, English, and Cantonese make audible the Chicana/o community's silence regarding its Asian heritage; and the heroine's fractured conversations on race and gender speak to the difficulties of voicing a mixed-race feminist politics in Chicana culture. The play's temporal gaps, its challenging linguistic interplays, and its historical ambiguities collectively communicate how the Chicana heroine cannot learn to *know* her Asian ancestry. Still, this drama's constant movement between various cultural trajectories articulates how she can nevertheless learn to *remember* her forgotten Asian heritage. As such, I argue that the play constructs its feminist ethics by imagining "China-cana" identities that are conscious of—yet struggling to come to terms with—the mixed-race genealogies of a culture that has historically marginalized its own "Asian traits."

This book's coda situates the interracial and transnational features of Chicana/o literature that I examine in chapters 1 through 5 within past and contemporary discussions on Chicana/o cultural studies. The interracial elements between Mexican Americans, Asians, and Asian Americans in Chicana/o literature over the last seven decades reveal that these groups are not as divorced as early critiques of borderlands culture insist, nor are they as removed as traditional paradigms of area or ethnic studies suggest. To be sure, the constitution of Chicana/o identity in this community's literary culture has never been a strictly local process. My modest hope is that this book brings this point to bear by excavating the significance of Chicana/o culture's underexamined—and oftentimes ignored—"rasgos asiáticos." These transpacific matters are not just concerns of our post-millennium era, or the consequences of our contemporary global age. Instead, as I shall demonstrate, they are cultural issues of our formative transnational pasts, and of our fascinating cross-racial imaginations.

NOTES

Introduction: Interracial Politics

1 Villarreal's *Pocho* (1959) was the first Chicana/o novel published by a mainstream American press. The novel was reprinted in 1970 and again in 1989. It was long regarded as the first Chicana/o novel until the Recovering US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project retrieved several nineteenth-century proto-Chicana/o texts in the 1990s. These works include two novels by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872) and *The Squatter and the Don* (1885). John-Michael Rivera identifies de Burton's 1872 text as the first novel to be written in English by a Mexican living in the United States after annexation in 1848. See Rivera, *The Emergence of Mexican America.*

2 Saldívar, *The Dialectics of Our America*, 110.

3 Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 202.

4 Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left*, 1.

5 Ibid., 3.

6 Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun*, 69.

7 Ibid., 91.

8 Notable instances of Mexican American and Asian cooperation are found predominantly in each group's labor history. For example, Japanese and Mexican agricultural workers in Oxnard, California, formed the Japanese Mexican Labor Association (JMLA) in 1903 to organize a strike against owners, banks, and merchants vested in the sugar beet industry in that region. According to Tomás Almaguer, the JMLA was the first major agricultural workers' union in California to strike successfully against Anglo capital in the state. Of its charter members, approximately five hundred were Japanese and two hundred were Mexican. See Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines.* The only significant and sustained instance of cross-racial labor cooperation between Asians and Mexican Americans during the 1960s took shape when Filipino members of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee joined César Chávez and the National Farm Workers Association to form the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) in 1965. The UFW staged a successful labor strike and boycott against grape growers in Delano, California, that same year. See Lien, *The Making of Asian America through Political Participation*; and Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory.* Outside of these groups' labor histories, Wendy Cheng has demonstrated how Asian Americans and Mexican Americans have recently come together to deal with local political matters in a California suburb;

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she addresses how interracial contact informed their political responses and influenced the racial consciousnesses of these groups. See Cheng, *The Changs Next Door to the Díazes.*

9 Alurista is the nom de plume of Alberto Baltazar Urista Heredia. Troubled by the threat of cultural and historical eradication, and providing poetic testimony to Chicana/o legal, economic, and educational discrimination, Alurista's experimental poetics in texts such as "History of Aztlán" (1969) and *Floricanto en Aztlán* (1971) romanticize a noble lineage between Chicana/os and Aztec Indians. In doing so, Alurista revitalized and popularized Amerindian myths in a contemporary context. To emphasize the influence of Alurista's cultural gestures and poetic sensibilities, Francisco Lomelí notes that *Floricanto en Aztlán* in particular stood as the standard by which Chicana/o poetry would be judged during the 1970s because of its thematic treatment of Chicana/o injustice and its emphasis on a neo-indigenist perspective. See Lomelí, "Contemporary Chicano Literature, 1959–1990." Unquestionably, Alurista emerged as a key figure for imagining and articulating Chicana/o ethno-cultural politics more generally, which, according to Philip Ortego, solidified a Chicana/o literary identity and precipitated a broad Chicana/o political and spiritual awakening ("Chicano Poetry: Roots and Writers").

10 The original title is "Ideología y estética en la significación poética chicana en la década 1965–1975." Seemingly wanting to come to terms with the extra-literary and transnational elements of Latin American nationalist poetics during the latter half of the twentieth century, Monique Lemaitre organized a high-profile panel of writers and critics at the 1983 annual meeting of the Latin American Studies Association in Mexico City. At the request of Tino Villanueva, himself a major Chicano poet of the era, Lemaitre invited Alurista to represent Chicana/o poets. Alurista presented his paper on September 26.

11 My emphasis and translation. The original reads: "La Guerra en Vietnam, paradigmático ejemplo del militarismo transnacional norteamericano establece las condiciones de la producción literaria Chicana en su sistemática significación poética."

12 This poem was written in 1969 but published in 1970. It enjoyed regular reprinting. Adding to its popularity, Nicolás Kanellos reminds us that it was also recorded on a 45 rpm vinyl record and distributed broadly by Luis Valdez ("José Montoya").

13 The impact of Montoya as cultural figure during and after the Chicana/o Movement cannot be overstated, nor can the importance of his most memorable poem, "El Louie." Montoya was a co-founder of the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), a nationally renowned art collective that translated Chicana/o life into language and visual arts. Despite Montoya's lifetime of writing and painting, "El Louie" remains his most influential work. This elegiac piece appeared as one of the first to incorporate Montoya's innovative meter combining English, standard Spanish, non-standard Spanish, and unique Chicana/o dialectal features, often called "caló." This combination of languages and dialects opened up poetry to a generation of novice readers who recognized idiomatic and slang expressions local to their communities, and it has garnered intense critical attention from Chicana/o culture's most recognizable literary critics. For an outline of this poem's critical history, which includes overviews of readings by José Davíd Saldívar, Rafael Pérez-Torres, José Limón, and Renato Rosaldo, see Martínez, *Countering the Counterculture.*

14 The original Spanish reads: "Nuestra palabra, signo, metáfora, y glifo se niega a . . . ser servil a otros. Somos Aztlán sin fronteras."

15 García, *Chicanismo*, 4.

16 See Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, particularly chapter 3, titled "People."

17 The FBI tracked Acosta for several years during the 1970s. As a result, this incident appears in "United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation Report on Southern Christian Leadership Conference: Racial Matters, May 28, 1970, Los Angeles California." The two-page report was declassified in 1974.

18 Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles*, 9.

19 Mariscal, *Aztlán and Vietnam*, 4–5.

20 See Chávez, *"Mi Raza Primero!"*

21 See García, *Mexican Americans*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*; Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!*; and Griswold del Castillo, "Introduction."

22 There are a few notable exceptions. See Cutler, "Disappeared Men"; Sae-Saue, "Aztlán's Asians"; and Olguín, "Sangre mexicana/corazón americano," which includes analyses of Chicana/o political identities in literary works that concern nearly all major US wars.

23 Pérez-Torres, "Refiguring Aztlán," 15.

24 Ibid.

25 Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative," 59.

26 Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun*, 13.

27 Said writes that part of his motivation for theorizing Orientalism as a colonial discourse was "to illustrate . . . specifically for formerly colonized peoples, the dangers and temptations of employing this [discourse] upon themselves and others" (*Orientalism*, 25).

28 See Davies, *Voyagers to the New World*; and Williams, "GM Allotypes in Native Americans."

29 The original Spanish reads: "[E]l hombre americano es de origen asiático" (Paz, "Dos apostillas: Asia y América," 141).

Chapter 1 Racial Equivalence

1 See Rodríguez, "El florecimiento de la literatura chicana."

2 Aztlán emerges in the 1970s not simply as a catchword for resistance, but rather as an operational term for establishing Chicana/o identity and opposition to US Anglo America, writ large. Rudolfo Anaya and Francisco Lomelí note that the term not only signified "a rallying cry of the Chicano Movement . . . [but also it] signaled a unifying point of cohesion through which [Chicana/os] could define the foundations for an identity. Aztlán brought together a culture . . . allowing it, for the first time, a framework within which to understand itself" ("Introduction," ii).

3 Luis Valdez designated his stage work as *"actos"* in order to highlight the improvisational form of his theater. "Acto" works also to signify the "actions" of Valdez's