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INDIGENEITY

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One of the most contested tendencies within Latino/a literature (and culture more generally) involves the focus on the continuance of the indigenous roots of Latino/a identity. To speak of Latino/a indigenous identity, however, is to immediately get involved in what could be seen as at once a redundant and an oxymoronic gesture: the categorical fusion of latinidad and indigeneity. This fusion, which lies at the heart of conceptualizations of mestizaje, points to the tensions underlying uses of latinidad. Whereas the "Latin" of latinidad points to the imaginative construction of an American (hemispheric) identity starting from its European (Spanish) roots, the indigenous turn often involves a rejection of these European roots. The category of indigeneity begins with but works quite differently from that of mestizaje, primarily because the emphasis on indigeneity (the "Indian" half of mestizo identity – the notion of "half" itself often serving to erase the third African "half" of the equation) works explicitly as an anti-colonial strategy in the face of continuing Anglo-American racism towards and exploitation of peoples of Hispanic descent – where "anti-colonial" signals an external strategy of colonized versus colonizer while "decolonial" would refer to internal challenges within a given identity formation (such as an injunction among Chicanos/as to learn Nahuatl). This is especially so when there is a need to counter the Anglo tendency to consider Latinos/as as foreigners within the US, regardless of the citizenship status and/or length of residency of any particular Latino/a.

This attention to continuing indigenous roots functions, then, primarily as a sign of territorial priority. In other words, as a challenge to the "illegal alienization," so to speak, of Latinos/as in mainstream Anglo culture and politics, the foregrounding of indigeneity highlights the fact that Latinos/as have been on this continent long before Anglo-Americans, not simply as a competing European power but as indigenous peoples. It is Anglo-Americans, according to this anti-colonial logic, who are the newcomers and invaders. Beyond this initial anti-colonial political gesture, as we shall see, the emphasis on indigeneity comes into play as a marker of cultural (versus strictly residential) continuity despite the legacy of genocide, as well as a path to aesthetic and spiritual development and expression (see Pérez 2005).

This indigenous turn has not gone unchallenged, however. Among the issues involved in such challenges are the following: 1) the all-too-easy charges of "nostalgia," "romanticism," and "essentialism" used against every ethnic or traditional revival

(charges which in academic settings, I would argue, tend more often to marginal indigenous knowledges than to challenge potentially racist categories – see Vald Rodríguez (2003) for a fictional version of this challenge); 2) the charge of anti-bla racism, wherein the turn to an indigenous identity reputedly masks an attempt erase blackness; and 3) the charge of illicit cooptation of signs of indigeneity at t expense of "real living" indigenous groups and peoples. The last category involves part the Latin American tradition of state *indigenismo*, wherein various cric (or European descendants born in the Americas) and mestizo (mixed European a indigenous) nationalists, as part of their independence struggles, hold out their ir genous past as a way to claim hemispheric priority in the face of European a Yankee forms of imperialism (Bonfil Batalla 1996; Díaz-Polanco 1997; Alcina Frar 1990). The Cárdenas administration in 1930s Mexico is often seen, for example contributing to an indigenist policy that celebrates indigenous roots (as in Di Rivera's mural projects) while ultimately erasing current indigenous peoples thro invocations of the progressive nature of mestizaje (building on the theory of Vasconcelos (1997 [1925])).

Cuban writer José Martí's works, especially "Nuestra América" (1891), rema paradigmatic example of the embrace of "Indian" identity as an anti-imperial stra (Lomas 2008). Martí's phrase "our America" situates Americans south of the Ur States ("from the Río Bravo to the Straits of Magellan") in opposition, on the hand, to Europeans and their criollo descendants (where the term "America" sig their differences) and to the United States ("our" America versus "their" Ame on the other. A new landscape (the Americas) gives rise to a new people (mest whose authentic roots lie with their indigenous ancestors and neighbors. U those who sought simply to ground their indigeneity in images of Indians of the Martí expands this heritage to include the living presence of contemporary Inc such as Guatemala's Mayan descendants, as well as contemporary Indians of Vene Mexico, and North America. Geography gives rise to a people who, in tune witl shaped by that landscape, can help save mestizos from the debilitating cu impact of their European roots and practices. Once the colonialist "dams" are down and contemporary Indians are granted full cultural self-determination, can restore themselves after centuries of genocidal oppression and, in the pr revitalize their mestizo children by re-acquainting them with their original cu practices. (See Fernández Retamar 1989; Bojórquez Urzaiz 2004; Fernández Va 1993; Belnap and Fernández 1998; and Mignolo 2005.)

I would argue that this Latino/a move to embrace and celebrate indigenous tity has played out very differently for writers with Caribbean roots than it h Chicano/a writers. While claims to Chicano/a indigeneity have certainly severely scrutinized within and without the Chicano/a community – often enc a situation where people of Mexican ancestry must present yet one more identity papers in order to be accepted for who they say they are – peo Caribbean ancestry face downright genocidal patterns of refusal and rejectior ics of indigenous Caribbean writers frame their attacks at best in terms of the see romantic gestures behind such claims; at worst, critics seek to paint Taíno a as delusional and racist, supposedly complicit in a pattern of whitening Car identity wherein Indians come out decidedly less black than their

selves. Whether of the "anti-romantic" or "anti-racist" mode, such attacks on claims to indigenous identity, I would argue, risk supporting a 500-year legacy of racist attempts to erase indigenous survival more than they help in countering efforts to erase blackness. Because of the dramatically different nature of the modes of denial of Chicano/a and Caribbean indigenous identity, I will frame this essay in regional rather than topical terms. I wish to assert at the outset, however, that I do not in any way wish to unearth past battles between Chicanos/as and Caribbean-originated Latinos/as when I pose this regional distinction. Such past battles, it seems to me, centered on problems related to Anglo-American definitions of citizenship and belonging rather than on interracial complications arising from Latino/a internalizations of Anglo-American valorizations of whiteness and rejections of blackness. My main point is that the crucial efforts to highlight black identity are not helped through the misguided efforts to erase indigenous identity as they end up serving a divide-and-conquer agenda.

Extinction vs. revival: Competing "myths" of the indigenous Caribbean

While the celebratory use of indigenous terms such as "Arawak," "Cemí," and "Borikén" remains predominant in the Caribbean-American literature of the past few decades, attempts to frame, say, Puerto Rican or Boricua identity in terms of its indigenous roots are sometimes hotly contested. In the words of Puerto Rican scholar Arlene Dávila (2001b: 35): "[W]e might ask, is the Taíno resurgence the result of a direct continuity with the past, or is it a New Age fad or a curiosity to be laughed at?" Even more contested are attempts by Cubans and Dominicans (whether diasporic or islander) to claim indigenous (usually Taíno) identity.

The story concerning the indigenous peoples of the northern Caribbean has been, at least since Bartolomé de las Casas's 1542 *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, that the original inhabitants whom Columbus called Indians quickly became not only conquered but extinct. As with other hemispheric versions of indigenismo, however, such presumed extinction allowed for criollo claims to indigeneity in their independence struggles and their nationalist marketing campaigns while rarely having to address the needs – or existence – of living Indians. This exploitation of indigeneity led to both of the "myths" I discuss here: the "myth" of extinction and the "myth" of revival or continuance. First, the nationalist exploitation of indigeneity provided the focal point for those wary of self-serving claims to indigenous roots that served mainly to support a racist elite dressed in Indian clothing through the "myth" of indigenous identity. Given the frequent function of such myths to serve also as a cloak for racist rejections of African roots (Sacoto 1981; Sagás 2000), this elitist strategy remains doubly troubling. Thus for many critics, *any* claims to indigenous identity in the formerly Spanish Caribbean immediately provoke anxieties over mythicization. (For Taíno myth in the traditional sense, see Tapia y Rivera (1943) and Orsini Luiggi (1974)). Second, the nationalist exploitation of indigeneity, to the extent that it obscures the visibility of the continuing existence and rights of surviving indigenous peoples, leads to the attack on the "myth" of extinction of

indigenous peoples by those who claim renewed or continuing indigenous iden whether through genetic or cultural inheritance.

At times references to indigenous genocide and conquest at the hands of Spanish serve to point to an inherited past trauma but do not necessarily ir any significant claim to present indigenous identity. Gloria Vando's 1993 p "The Legend of the Flamboyán," for example, depicts the questions and strategi the Taíno of Borikén upon the arrival of the Spanish. While Vando portrays intelligence, heroism, wisdom, and harmonious relations with nature of the lowers of Chief Agüeybaná and the murderous greed of the European conque her poem is ultimately a lament for the numerous deaths of the indigenous po tion, some through mass suicide, whose absence now exhibits itself in the Flamb flower, the "stained silence" amid the "splashes of blood / blooming all ove island" (Vando 1993b: 45). The lingering beauty of the Taíno despite the horrc conquest takes the form of the hummingbird in Martín Espada's "Colibrí" (34–6). Lizards scatter through lush forests strewn with the cemís ("the rock carv of eyes and mouths / in perfect circles of amazement") as though still fleeir Spanish, those "who conquered / with iron and words" such as "Taíno" fc indigenous peoples and "colibrí" for the hummingbird (who, like the lizard: appears to be darting and banging in escape, its "racing Taíno heart / frantic hearing / the bellowing god of gunpowder / for the first time"). This humming lucky enough to be cupped in the hands of a kind human who then releas frightened bird through "the window, / where he disappears / into a paradise of s nightfall of singing frogs." "If only history," the speaker laments, "were lik hands;" then the Taíno might likewise have been saved from the destruction Conquest.

More frequently, references to indigenous roots serve as a sign of the tri racial composition of the Boricua, as in Aurora Levins Morales's 1986 poem of the Americas." Examining the complex nature of her mestizaje, she writes not African. Africa is in me, but I cannot return. / I am not taína. Taíno is in r there is no way back. / I am not European. Europe lives in me, but I have nc there" (Levins Morales and Morales 1986: 50). Taíno ancestry does not le sense of Taíno identity any more than African or European ancestry he identify with a particular element of her background. This can also be seen Morales's ironic portrayal of his own attempts to make sense of his comple identity when he looks into the mirror and sees "someone of a different rac ferent social class, a different life philosophy," such as an Egyptian, a high African-American, or "sometimes, when [he's] feeling really scattered, [he] Taino tribe member, ingesting the psychoactive drug called *cohoba* in searc vertical shaft that leads to the Fourth Dimension" (2002: 26). Or as Víctor He Cruz puts it, "When I write in Puerto Rican Spanish ... I am writing in a l which has Taíno, Arabic-Gypsy-Berber, and African words" (1997: 22). But basically asks, in his poem "Mesa Blanca," if the Taíno truly vanished, as books say, then where are all of these mestizos coming from? He then go catalog the indigenous things that clearly have not vanished: the gestures, t dreams, intuitions, memories, fruits, rivers, names of towns, fish, musica ments, dances, and ultimately the ground itself (Hernández Cruz 1997: 47–

refusal to be erased emanates from Bobby González's ironically entitled collection of poems *The Last Puerto Rican Indian* (González 2006).

One of the most popular accounts of the difficulties in confronting and comprehending this tripartite racial mix is Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). Chapter 15 of this memoir, "Brothers Under the Skin," explores Thomas's attempts to make sense of what it means to be a dark-skinned Puerto Rican in New York in the mid-twentieth century. The author as a young man notices that his brother José's penis is "white." "Only ones got black peters is Poppa and me," he thinks to himself, "and Poppa acts like his is white, too" (1967: 142). After explaining to José that they must have black ancestry in order for Piri to be so dark, José vehemently argues, "My skin is white. White, goddammit! White! Maybe Poppa's a little dark, but that's the Indian blood in him" (1967: 144). "'What kinda Indian?' I said bitterly. 'Caribe? Or maybe Borinquén? ... '" (1967: 145). In a 1995 interview, Thomas asserted that he considers himself "un Negrito," and also has "blood of the Taíno as well as the blood of the conquerors, the Spanish, and other Europeans along the way" (Cintrón 1995, 275).

Nuyorican poet Sandra María Esteves, however, without eliding the other crucial components of her racial mix, is much more assertive in her references to Taíno identity, although these figure primarily as references to the past. The major conceit in her poem "Native American" (1990) involves the comparison of her indigenous roots to a tree in its native soil. Listing several possible names that she could claim as her own, most of them Hispanic, the final three are "Quarionex, Agüeybana Cemí." In "Who Is Going to Tell Me?" focusing on the account of the "encounter" between her Spanish and indigenous ancestors, the speaker can find records of her Spanish great grandfathers but goes on to ask, "On whose gilded pages are inscribed / the names of my great grandmothers?" (Esteves 1990: 57).

Cuban writer and scholar José Barreiro has written one of the most extensive fictional accounts of the initial relations between the Taíno and the Spanish. In *The Indian Chronicles* (1993), Barreiro asserts that while doing research on the descendants of the aboriginal peoples of the Caribbean he found and translated the diary of Diego Colón, the adopted son of Christopher Columbus. Colón's 440-page manuscript "tells of events lived by the author, mostly around the period 1532–35, but with episodes that recall the first encounter at the island of Guanahani, site of Columbus's landfall and the author's home island" (Barreiro 1993: 9–10). The manuscript is made up of seven folios with titles such as: "Our Reality and Theirs" (with a section subtitled "Hard to explain our Indian religion, even to a good friar") and "Losing Everything."

One of the most elaborated arguments for taking Caribbean Latino/a indigenous claims seriously is that by Tony Castanha in his book *The Myth of Indigenous Caribbean Extinction: Continuity and Reclamation in Borikén* (2010). Castanha challenges the myth that "the indigenous inhabitants of mainly the northern Antilles were extinguished by the Spaniards around the mid-sixteenth century" (Castanha 2010: 2). Because the history of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean has been told by the colonizers, the realities of native survival and resurgence have been masked in order to promote various nationalist myths. This myth-making process helps perpetuate the nationalist image of the tripartite (Indian, African, and Spanish) nature of

"Puerto Rican" ethnic identity, an image that relegates the Indian quotient past. The term "Jíbaro," Castanha argues, originally referred to Borikén's ind people (Silén 1971: 20). He writes that in the Indian language the word means but eventually came to refer simply to the peasants of the island and conse became an iconic image of the national character of the Puerto Rican peo whole. This point is a key example of Castanha's strategy of showing that " and Spanish people and traditions were essentially assimilated or synthesi the indigenous lifestyle as survival strategies. As the Carib were exogamou marriage did not dilute the culture and people but rather enhanced th increased their chances of survival" (Castanha 2010: 7). Drawing on histor entific (mitochondrial DNA studies – see also Haslip-Viera 2006 and Lal et al 2001), census, and especially ethnographic sources (interviews and Castanha claims to uncover the continuing existence of the indigenous Boricuas not simply among isolated groups of "genetically" authentic Ind among the population as a whole. In the process, he seeks to debunk once all the myth of extinction that continues to marginalize if not erase co today's indigenous people of Puerto Rico.

An instructive exercise in this regard is to compare two critical collec essays that could be seen as representative of either side of this debate. The supporting Latino/a claims to indigeneity would be *Indigenous Resurgen Contemporary Caribbean*, edited by Maximilian C. Forte (2006). In a rev essay titles themselves reveal the key elements at play in this collection: " Absences of Extinction and Marginality – What Difference Does an In Presence Make?;" "Taíno Survivals: Cacique Panchito, Caridad de lo Cuba;" "*Ocama-Daca Taíno* (Hear Me, I Am Taíno): Taíno Survival on Hi Focusing on the Dominican Republic;" and "Before, We Were Asleep: must Awake from Our Sleep and Move Forward."

The opposing volume, while itself containing many differing views – in Taíno perspective – would have to be *Taíno Revival: Critical Perspectives Rican Identity and Cultural Politics*, edited by Gabriel Haslip-Viera (2001) critic of Latino/a Caribbean indigenous resurgence. Again, the basic drift c lection as a whole can be gleaned from the essay titles, including "Compe tities: Taíno Revivalism and Other Ethno-Racial Identity Movements amo Ricans and Other Caribbean Latinos in the United States, 1980–Present"; Indians Out of Blacks: The Revitalization of Taíno Identity in Contempora Rico"; and, as a counterpoint, "Rethinking Taíno: A Taíno Perspective."

Aztlán and indigenous roots in Chicano/a literature

The defining gesture of the Chicano Movement was its embrace of the i roots of Mexican-American culture as an anti-colonial act of self-defir transformation of the negative connotations of the name "Chicano" into a pride – for "Chicano" had previously pointed to the "primitive" Indian mestizo (Alarcón 1989). Following the proponents of Mexican nationalism focused primarily on the Aztecs (Mexica) in their identification with i

tribal roots (although certain writers at times also point to ancient Toltec (Ana Castillo 1988), contemporary Mayan (Juan Felípe Herrera 1997), and other indigenous tribes). This gesture initially strove for inclusion of indigeneity into a mestizo identity after centuries of its exclusion and, as in Mexico, looked primarily to the past glory of precortesian Aztec civilization. Key to this counternationalist politics and poetics is the image of Aztlán, the presumed homeland of the Aztecs, an area comprising much of the four-corners states. What the image of Aztlán affords is a claim to territorial priority and a reversal of the logic of American national identity: it is not the Chicano who is a stranger on this land but the Anglo-American. The Chicano can now claim an ancestral heritage in the Southwest dating back over a thousand years (Klor de Alva 1989).

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzáles's epic poem "I am Joaquín" (1967) was a landmark in the development of Chicano identity. This celebration of mestizaje is key to Joaquín's understanding of self (see Hartley 2011). For example, at one point he states, "I am Cuauhtémoc, / proud and noble," but then goes on to complicate this by identifying with "the gachupín Cortés, / who also is the blood, / the image of myself." He then reiterates this sense of being both conqueror and conquered when he claims "I am the sword and flame of Cortés / the despot / And / I am the eagle and serpent of / the Aztec civilization." But the key to his success as a survivor, his endurance, comes strictly from his indigenous roots: "The Indian has endured and still / emerged the winner, / the Mestizo must yet overcome, / And the gachupín will just ignore." Poet Raul Salinas, on the other hand, tends to focus primarily on his Amerindian roots and his American Indian brotherhood, associating himself with historical events such as the occupations of Wounded Knee and Alcatraz (see especially Salinas 2006).

The novels of Rudolfo Anaya signal a shift in Chicano consciousness in terms of the emphasis on indigenous roots as we move from *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) to *Heart of Aztlán* (1976). The coming-of-age plot of *Bless Me, Ultima* involves Antonio Márez's growing awareness, through the influence of the *curandera* (folk healer) Ultima, of the importance of indigenous beliefs and practices in dealing with life's challenges and spiritual questions. Indigenous practices are sought not so much as a primary path to identification but as a syncretic complex, a fusion of native and European beliefs and practices (a fusion characteristic of curanderismo itself, as we shall see). In *Heart of Aztlán*, on the other hand, native ancestry becomes primary for the growing sense of pride and spiritual power (through the magic of a blue guitar and visions of Aztlán) among the oppressed railroad workers of Albuquerque's Barelas barrio.

The poet Alurista, who also engaged in the shift from "brown" to "red" identity, played a key role in constructing a national allegory to compete with that of the "Gringo." In "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" (Alurista 1989) the founding manifesto of the Chicano Movement, Alurista writes, "Brotherhood unites us, and love for our brothers makes us a people whose time has come and who struggles against the foreigner 'gabacho' who exploits our riches and destroys our culture. With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation." "The Plan," written in 1969, made explicit the connection between national and cultural politics: "CULTURAL values of our people strengthen our

identity and the moral background of the movement. ... Our cultural values of li family, and home will serve as a powerful weapon to defeat the gringo dollar val system and encourage the process of love and brotherhood." Chicano poets a artists must help in the construction of a united and revolutionary Chicano ident in opposition to the capitalist values of the "foreigner gabachos," the Anglo-Americ who, with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, took possession of almost l of Mexico's territory, the present-day American Southwest (Menchaca 2001).

The elements characteristic of Alurista's Chicano nationalism are displayed in poem "A Child to Be Born": "a child to be born / pregnant is the continente / el ba y la raza / to bear Aztlán on our forehead." Key to the poem's indigenizatio Alurista's repetition of forms of his compound term "madretierraroja" (or mothererarth) (see Arteaga (1997: 99) on this hybridizing poetics). Aztlán is continentetierraroja" (redearthcontinent – a hemispheric identification gestu towards a pan-indigenous politics and community) and is thus the seed plante "nuestro padre Quetzalcoatl" – our father, the feathered-serpent god of the A (who reappears in the poem in his Mayan incarnation as Aztlán's "padrecarnali [fatherbrotherhood] Kukulcán" as he guides this amerindian nationcl The counter-hegemonic process which Alurista sets in motion involves an a indian syncretism that counters the impact of Spanish colonialism by transl Christian figures back into Aztec, Toltec, and Mayan ones – as when the go Tonantzín appears in the poem as "redmotherearth."

In *The Last Generation* (1993), Cherríe Moraga provides a crucial version o indigenous argument, writing that the majority of Chicanos/as have been denie

> direct information regarding our tribal affiliations. Since our origins ar usually in the southwest and México, Chicanos' Indian roots encompass range of nations including Apache, Yaqui, Papago, Navajo, and Tarahuma from the border regions, as well as dozens of Native tribes througho México. Regardless of verifiable genealogy, many Chicanos have recent begun to experience a kind of collective longing to return to our culture traditional Indigenous beliefs and ways of constructing community in order find concrete solutions for the myriad problems confronting us, from t toxic dump sites in our neighborhoods to rape.
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> (Moraga 1993: 1(

Arguing in a similar vein in *Borderlands/La Frontera* Gloria Anzaldúa writes Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance" (Ar 1987: 43). She highlights this indigenous connection as she frequently uses sions such as "the Indian woman in me" (1987: 44), "our Indian ancestry" (19 my "dark Indian self" (1987: 65), and "my people, the Indians" (1987: 83). (writer Ana Castillo shares this project of indigenous self-definition while e defining this project as a challenge to Anglo and Spanish Conquest, writing in N *of the Dreamers* that the "very act of self-definition is a rejection of colon (Castillo 1994b: 12).

A crucial move within Chicana feminism is the reclamation of the cultura diments of indigenous womanhood that have been demonized by Christia

western rationalism. A prominent example in *Borderlands* is Anzaldúa's reconstruction of Coatlicue, the monstrous earth mother deity of the Aztecs (Aigner-Varoz 2000, 56–7; Alarcón 1989; Lara 2008). Whereas, in the masculinist cosmology of the Aztecs, Coatlicue (Earth) and her daughter Coyolxauhqui (Moon) are eclipsed and dismembered by Coatlicue's son Huitzilopochtli (Sun/War), in Anzaldúa's reconstructed cosmology – which involves returning to the matriarchal roots of Amerindian symbolism – the female principle embodied by Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui is repositioned as the center of social consciousness. Monstrosity and dismemberment here pave the way for insight into the nature of the soul and the healing of the social wound – *la herida abierta*.

The Chicana reappropriation of figures such as the Virgin of Guadalupe (the hispanicized version of the goddess Coatlalopeuh) also involves a spiritual dimension to Chicano/a decolonization. "Through the agency and subjectivity of our women elders," writes Yolanda Broyles-González, "indigenous Mexican American communities have forged and transmitted the tools and strategies of a faithful resistance to a systemic and widespread colonial and 'post'-colonial dehumanization" that has marginalized women's spiritual practices to the realms of the unscientific and untheoretical (2002: 118). The presumably Catholic folk saints are in fact masked indigenous spiritualists forced underground through the genocidal practices of the state and the Church. The "widespread veneration of Guadalupe set the cornerstone for the Indianization of Roman Catholicism after 1531" (2002: 123) through such subterranean camouflage, leading ultimately to the "symbolic and (to some extent) real marginalization of Spanish domination" (2002: 124). Broyles-González argues that many critics of borderland culture "lose themselves in abstract concepts of 'mestizaje,' 'hybridity,' or 'syncretism' because they see only the publicly visible 'hybridity' without regard for the covert, unseen, and unspoken cycles of colonialism that propel appropriation of selected colonial features" (2002: 122).

A more recent move in Chicano/a literature involves what AnaLouise Keating (following Anzaldúa) has called spiritual activism. Among the many projects growing out of this active spiritual emphasis, Lara Medina has stressed that, through shared ceremonial practices, coalition building between Chicanos/as and other North American Native groups could result from this politically spiritualized turn to *indigenismo*, writing that as "[p]articipating in ceremonies not only shares healing knowledge but builds political alliances between Chicanas and northern *indígena* peoples" (1998: 198). This healing, Medina claims, results from the decolonization of the spirit through a reclaimed ritual community (1998: 191; see also Anzaldúa 1996; Keating 2006; 2008a; 2008b; Lara 2005; 2008; Pérez 1998; Ramírez 2002)

Also important is the refiguration of indigenous spirituality in "folk" practices and beliefs such as curanderismo (Hartley 2010). Curanderismo is a healing practice with origins in Arab (via Spain), African (via diasporic slaves), Greek, Spanish, and Amerindian cultures (Avila 1999). Despite being superficially transformed by the monotheistic traditions of Islam and Christianity, the practices and belief systems of curanderismo stem primarily from polytheistic tribal-indigenous sources. Curanderas often use Christianized elements, but these elements themselves are primarily pre-Christian, given a Christian veneer through various syncretistic influences. These elements are in substance no different from those of Aztec or Maya healing

practices. A frequent scenario in Chicano/a literature involving curanderismc transmission of sacred knowledge (of earth, plants, animals, spirits, and the interaction with all of these). Such is the case in Anzaldúa's children's book *and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y la llorona* (1995). This is also the case in Ana C novel *So Far From God* (1994c). The elder curandera doña Felicia passes knowledge, especially in the form of rituals and remedios, to Caridad.

As with the Caribbean writers examined above, however, Chicano/a write also been attacked at times for their emphasis on their indigenous characte figure who has received a good deal of criticism for her indigenous claims ar bology is Anzaldúa. Most common is the charge of romantic appropriation against her by Chicano/a scholars (Sáenz 1997; Saldaña-Portillo 2001; C 2008). She was quite conscious of the resistances such an indigenous identi might cause and attempted to contextualize such gestures. In an email intervi Inés Hernández-Avila and Domino Pérez she discussed the ways in whi Chicanas and Native women challenged this move. Hating the Indian in the some Raza display the mechanisms of internalized colonialism as th "las indias" as other: "Nosotras gets divided into nos/otras, into an us/them The us/them dichotomy locks us into a who-is-more-oppressed dynamic. alized racism and internalized shame get played out" (Anzaldúa et al 2004: also points to the tendency among some native women to see Chicanas a priationists who continue "the abuse of native spirituality and the appropriation of Indian symbols, rituals, vision quests, and spiritual heali tices like shamanism. Some natives put Chicanas/os on the side of the do and claim our fantasies are similar to those of 'whites.'" This rift become complicated as different groups are pitted against one another for resource demic institutions, aggravating the "wounds of genocidal colonization and alization that have never formed scabs because they've continued to b centuries" (2004: 10).

Interestingly, one of the first people to have identified Aztlán as the homeland was scholar Jack Forbes in 1962, who himself is not Chicano but P Renápe/Delaware-Lenápe (Forbes 1962). Even so, this territorial claim ap some critics as an erasure and dispossession of native peoples living in t before and since the "return" of the Aztecas del Norte, as Forbes refers to (Forbes 1973). Mexicans, after all, are descendants of the Conquistadors territorial claims in places such as what is now New Mexico are especially to, for example, the Pueblo peoples. Add to this the racist penchant "Hispanos" or "New Mexicans" to claim pure Spanish blood (as oppos mestizaje of Mexicans) as well as to continue to celebrate the "cultural l Conquistadors such as Juan de Oñate, and it can be easy to see why the em Chicano/a indigeneity upsets some American Indian critics and their allies.

Esselen scholar Deborah Miranda, in a complex but relatively sympathet the "heresy" of recognizing Chicano/a indigeneity, explains another sour tension behind the question of such recognition: the fear among some Indians of losing their own federally recognized status *as* American I granting legitimacy to the claims to indigeneity of a people defined (by the state) as mestizo. "Thus, as I see our situation now," Miranda explains, "L

can accept the indigenous lineage and hearts of Chicanas, but still resist embracing our own mestiza identity until we are more assured that our indigenous survival is provided for. When we omit Chicanas from the 'Indian Rolls,' then, what we are also doing is resisting our own coming out as Mestizas" (Miranda 2002: 206).

Not all American Indians, of course, take such a cautious stand towards Chicano/a indigenism. Nimipu-Chicana scholar Inés Hernández-Ávila, for example, has written:

> My own vision ... is inclusive of mestizas/mestizos, Chicanas/Chicanos in definitions of "Indianness," which in itself disrupts the definition of "Indian" that is commonly associated with the study of Native American literature, as well as with most Native American Studies programs in general. This particular position is apparently as unpalatable to many Indian scholars as it is to many Chicana and Chicano scholars, due to the internalized racism and historically regulated animosities that have obstructed the si(gh)ting of both communities with respect to each other.
>
> (Hernández-Ávila 1995: 493)

According to Chicana critic María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, Gloria Anzaldúa's indigenism "reproduces liberal models of choice that privilege her position as a US Chicana: she goes through her backpack and decides what to keep and what to throw out, and she chooses to keep signs of indigenous identity as ornamentation and spiritual revival" (Saldaña-Portillo 2001: 420). Implicit in such a gesture, Saldaña-Portillo contends, is the erasure of "the living Indian who refuses mestizaje as an avenue to political and literary representation" and demands instead "new representational models that include her among the living." Saldaña-Portillo positions this passage as perhaps the greatest sign of Anzaldúa's apparent complicity in the Mexican nationalist uses of mestizaje as well as her complicity in the developmentalist construction of the revolutionary subject. In response to this characterization, Rafael Pérez-Torres writes: "It is important to cast a critical eye on the recasting of Chicano subjectivity as indigenous. ... Recognizing these critical points [that must be addressed], I think it equally important to draw a distinction between mestizaje in the context of Mexican and Chicano identity formations" (2006: 14). Pérez-Torres's point is that whereas mestizaje served to support a Mexican state indigenismo and a mestizo dominant class while ultimately erasing indigenous peoples from view, in the case of Chicanismo the indigenous turn sought to undo this erasure from the point of view of a dominated group.

Conclusion

In concluding I will not rehearse the particular themes I have examined in this essay but rather speak once more to what I see as one of the most debilitating charges against nearly all turns to indigenous identification, namely the charge of being romantic, primitivistic, and nostalgic – a phenomenon hardly unique to the Latino/a literary world. I see this critique (if not outright attack, as it often is) as primarily

colonizing in itself to the extent that it takes modernity as the standard (
negatively, as in the unhappy reality we must all face and accommodate oursel
and any reference to some kind of indigenous resistance to modernity as f
lost in the past, either hopelessly utopian or, worse, politically reactiona
retrogressive. It is colonizing to the extent that it takes an aspect of recent
history – modernity – and universalizes it to the extent that any attempt to ch
it is immediately written off as nostalgic, etc. Moreover, such charges rarely
an elaboration that might somehow justify the use of the term "romantic" or
how such a romanticism might actually be in play. These charges instead oft
the effect of ending the conversation and of silencing alternative discourses re
indigenous knowledges and practices. I am not at all arguing that there
such examples of noble savagism and oversimplification; I am arguing t
whole dynamic needs to be rethought outside of the lens of euro-modern i
and institutionalization and the resulting accommodationist alignment
modernity.

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19
ENVIRONMENTALISM

Grisel Y. Acosta

Ecocriticism and the Latino/a landscape: Background

My memories of growing up in Chicago's Logan Square include seeing several fa
friends lose appendages in work-related incidents and reading countless pamp
about asbestos and lead paint. The Latino/a population in the US continues
disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards in both urban and rura
tings, hazards that include higher odds of occupational injury in industrial, far
and construction jobs (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health 2
But my memories also include staring at pine trees in my yard and dancing in
There is variety. One would think ecocritical analyses of Latino/a literature -
with accounts of the Amazon or the agricultural Midwest or farmworkers' unic
trips between the urban Northwest and the Caribbean – would be easy to fin
articles originate in different departments under different scholarly headings.
onmentalism in literature, which can fall under ecocriticism or nature writi
environmental justice studies (to further the confusion, the term environment
tice also points to environmental social justice issues outside of literary studies
acknowledged as an area of study in the early 1990s, mainly with exploratic
texts that described the rural US through the eyes of non-Latino/a white au
Nature was viewed as a benign and peaceful place to visit for renewal, a place
preserved but also a place in danger because of human pollution. Ecocritics
from English, anthropology, modern language, and education departments,
others. Despite the many departments open to this field of study, ecocritic
quickly admitted that the origins of ecocriticism had a narrow view.

Cheryll Glotfelty is widely cited as the first ecocritic to acknowledge that ec
cism began as "a white movement" and that its future would lie in "interdiscip
multicultural and international" connections (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996
However, Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic, in their introduction to "The Sho
We Stand On: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism," argue that sc
like "Gloria Anzaldúa had already laid the groundwork for expanding what cc
defined as 'environmental texts,'" (2009: 8). Scholars of color had alread
writing explorations of environmental issues found within literature by pe
color, and their view included urban environments and the effects of envirc
on various peoples. Adamson and Slovic cite T.V. Reed's "Environmental
Ecocriticism: A Memo-Festo" (1997) – which Adamson published, in a d

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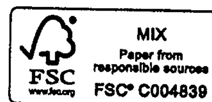

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