OTHER BY DESIGN:

CONSTRUCTIONS OF OTHERNESS AND

RECOGNITION OF THE SELF AS OTHER IN

LATINO DIASPORIC FICTION IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

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D.Litt. Dissertation by

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This study examines the Latino Other in literature through a synecdochic representation of Latino diasporic fiction, using four essential threads. The works analyzed are: *The Long Night of White Chickens*, by Francisco Goldman; *The Book of Unknown Americans*, by Cristina Henríquez; and *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, by Ana Menéndez. The four threads are the recognition of the self as Other, the exoticization of the Latino Other, the commodification of culture through tourism, and the influence of language on national and personal identity. One of this paper's major tenets is that a legacy of entitlement or privilege for White America has rooted itself in the very core of U.S. national identity and has resulted in the Othering of subordinate groups, including Latinos. This Othering surfaces in the fiction of all three writers in various ways, as seen through the examination of the four essential threads.

Literature is shaped by a complex interplay of history, society, culture, and spatiality along with myriad influences over decades of time. The confluence of these forces helps to form both individual and collective identities, and to construct the

paradigm of us and them, belonging and rejection. These tropes are internalized by the masses, and emerge in the texts of writers and thinkers living in any given era. This is especially true of the literature produced by the Latino diaspora in the United States. In this study I have attempted to set a literary critical paradigm that can readily be used to explore and analyze Latino diasporic literature. By using four avenues of inquiry, readers can unearth layers of historical, cultural, spatial, and sociological complexities from the text.

To my friend Luis Alejandro, whose last name
cannot appear in these pages,
as he is still in the shadows,
anticipating a time when,
after years of waiting,
he can live and work without fear
of deportation

and

To Job, who has crossed that damned dessert seven times

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Twelfth century French philosopher, Bernard of Chartres, used to say that "We [the Moderns] are like dwarfs, perched on the shoulders of giants [the Ancients], and thus we are able to see more and farther than the latter. And it is not because of the acuteness of our sight or the stature of our body, but because we are carried aloft and elevated by the magnitude of the giants." This concept, first introduced to me by Dr. Arlene Hopp Scala, expresses how I feel not only about her, but also about the professors, academics and colleagues I have come to know over many years of night school. They comprise an army of noble souls working to give and to gain knowledge, to seek new insights, and to expand our understanding of the world in which we live. For having met and worked with them, I am eternally grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF OTHERNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

Not knowing, in Aztlan

the way they look at you
the school teachers
the way they look at you
the city hall clerks
the way they look at you
the cops
the airport marshals
the way they look at you.

You don't know if it's something you did
or something you are.

Tino Villanueva

Tino Villanueva's poem illustrates, at least for some, what it is like to be a part of the Latino diaspora in the United States. There is a fundamental insecurity in not knowing how to interpret the gaze of the mainstream culture and where one fits or does not fit in, particularly for the brown skinned Latino. In America, politics and nationalism have worked hand in hand to create the concept of a white national identity, which has directly and indirectly led to Othering for masses of people who now form various diasporas in the United States, specifically those who are nonwhite and non-English speaking.

For a working definition of the term Other, Sociologist Andrew Okolie's explanation serves well:

> Social identities are relational; groups typically define themselves in relation to others. This is because identity has little meaning without the

> "other." So, by defining itself a group defines others. Identity is rarely claimed or assigned for its own sake. These definitions of self and others have purposes and consequences. They are tied to rewards and punishment, which may be material or symbolic. There is usually an expectation of gain or loss as a consequence of identity claims.
>
> This is why identities are contested. Power is implicated here, and because groups do not have equal powers to define both *self* and the *other*, the consequences reflect these power differentials. Often notions of superiority and inferiority are embedded in particular identities (Okolie 2).

Othering, then, is any action, whether individual or embedded in a system of oppression, intentional or inadvertent, that causes a person to feel "less than" or otherwise secondary. In regard to Latinos, Othering goes beyond racial prejudice, because two important elements of Latino Othering are language and place—markers that can be used to remind a person that he or she does not belong to the culture in which he or she lives.

The theory of differential racialization applies here in that certain Latino groups have been racialized in structured ways by the majority culture, and this racialization is a determining factor in Latino diasporic literature. According to the *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, differential racialization affirms that "Racial groups in the United States—Blacks, Latinos, Asian-Americans and Native Americans, for example, have been racialized in different ways in response to the needs of the majority group" (503). Racial theorist Avtar Brah explains it this way:

> I argue against positions that conceptualize racism through simple bipolarities of negativity and positivity, superiority and inferiority,

> inclusion or exclusion . . . I point to the ways in which racism simultaneously inhabits spaces of deep ambivalence and desire. The changing forms of a plurality of racisms are analyzed with the aid of the concept of *differential racialization*. This idea is an important component of my conceptual framework, interrogating binarized forms of thinking, and exploring how different racialized groups are positioned differently vis-à-vis one another (Murji and Solomos 145).

Literature generated from groups that came to the United States from elsewhere is shaped by various processes, which include a complex interplay of history, society, culture, and spatiality along with myriad influences over decades of time. The confluence of these forces helps to form both individual and collective identities, and to construct the paradigm of us and them, belonging and rejection. These tropes are internalized by the general public, and emerge in the texts of writers and thinkers living in any given era. This is especially true of the literature produced by the Latino diaspora in the United States.

This study analyzes, in whole or in part, the following pieces of literature through four essential threads: *The Long Night of White Chickens*, by Francisco Goldman; *The Book of Unknown Americans*, by Cristina Henríquez; and *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, by Ana Menéndez. The respective diasporas of these writers are Guatemala, Panama, and Cuba. The four essential threads in each section are: the recognition of the self as Other, the exoticization of the Latino Other, the commodification of culture through tourism, and the influence of language on national and personal identity. Strands

from each work that do not lend themselves to an across the board comparison present an opportunity for further consideration.

The recognition of the self as Other is a term I use to describe a phenomenon that occurs when a person or literary character, who, through the agents of displacement or deterritorialization, is living in a new country and discovers that despite a feeling of naturalness or belonging to that country, becomes aware that he or she is considered "less than" or Other in the gaze of the dominant culture. This subordinate status is often in conflict with his or her own self-image, creating what Adrienne Rich refers to as a "psychic disequilibrium." Rich describes the phenomenon as follows:

> When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in to a mirror and saw nothing. Yet you know you exist and others like you, that this is a game with mirrors. It takes some strength of soul—and not just individual strength, but collective understanding—to resist this void, this nonbeing, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard. (Rich, *Blood, Bread and Poetry*)

In the case of diasporic peoples, there may be an image reflected back, but it diverges from what one imagines his or her own image to look like. A person of diaspora may recognize this image (or lack thereof) as both valid and invalid, simultaneously true and false. As a part of the wider culture, he or she can see points of cultural cohesion, such as

sharing the same land, enjoying similar leisure activities, and savoring spending time with one's family. As a member of an out group, however, a diasporic person can also see the points of cultural divergence, for example, not sharing the same origin, language or history, not understanding subtle cultural nuances in humor or politics, or not fully comprehending fads or the collective zeitgeist. When members of a diaspora look through the lens of this second set of parameters, they are likely to recognize themselves, not as part of the mainstream, but, through the gaze of the wider culture, as the Others within the midst.

Roger Graetz, the protagonist in Goldman's novel, *The Long Night of White Chickens*, is startled to recognize himself as Other in not only one, but two countries. He felt sure of his superior status when was young and, as an American, moved to Guatemala with his mother. When the other children disparage his Indian features, however, and he sees to his surprise that they are whiter than he is, he recognizes himself as Other in their eyes. Once he moves back to the United States, he understands that he is also seen as Other for being a "spik." His maid/adoptive sister, Flor de Mayo de Puac, a Guatemalan orphan, is Othered by both cultures as well, but she is seen as the exotic Other, something to be conquered as an unusual and prized possession.

Several of the characters in Cristina Henríquez's novel, *The Book of Unknown Americans,* also recognize themselves as Other. High school student, Mayor Toro, for example, despite growing up in America and being educated in American schools, is referred to as Major Pan (short for Panama) by his peers, a reminder that he may live here, but he will never be from here. Raphael Toro, Mayor's father, plans on returning home to Panama for a reunion when the specter of Otherness arises. As he makes

telephone arrangements with a former classmate, he is shocked by his friend's comments about rolling out the red carpet for the American royalty. He recognizes that he is not considered fully Panamanian by those still living there because he is no longer a countryman, with all the cultural, historical, and social connotations that word implies. He comprehends that those from his homeland now see him as Other. Alma Rivera, who has come to the U.S. with her husband seeking medical treatment for their brain-injured daughter, also discerns herself as Other when she notices the stares they get from people in a convenience store as they attempt to purchase a few items. She wonders what she and her family must look like to the people waiting on line and correctly interprets that, from the viewpoint of those who belong to a place, her family does not fit in. Their attire, their language, and their inability to navigate a seemingly simple transaction, brand them as the Latino Other.

Perhaps the most poignant example of the recognition of the self as Other is Máximo, from Ana Menéndez's, short story "In Cuba, I Was a German Shepherd," in her collection of stories by the same name. Máximo, a Cuban refugee who has been living in the United States for several decades, becomes increasingly ensconced in memory and nostalgia as the world changes around him. He resists going to the local park to play dominos with this friends because he knows that tourists who come to the park to view the exotic Cuban Other will gawk him at. Knowing that he is looked at as a curiosity or an oddity diminishes Máximo's dignity, reducing him to tears.

The exoticization of the Latino Other is a historical occurrence and has roots in both aversion and desire. In his article, "Exoticism and Heinrich Heine," Meno Spann, professor of German languages and literature, discusses exoticism as first and foremost

an attitude of the mind. He states, "The craving for a more abundant and intense life goes hand in hand with a romantic longing for the primitive so often apparent in the literature of highly developed civilizations" (86). Spann suggests that in craving the primitive, civilized nations are trying to escape from their own discontent, from the blasé, dreary routine of existence. The concept of the exotic, then, is not intrinsic to a person, place, or object; but rather, it is an imposed value that only makes sense from the point of view of the dominant culture. In his entry on otherness in the *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Jean-Francois Staszak states, "As a construction of Otherness exoticism is characterized by the asymmetry of its power relationships: it is Westerners who, during the phases of exploration then colonization, defined elsewhere and delimited exotism. The word exotic has become a synonym of tropical or even colonial" (6). Exoticism is the most directly geographical form of Otherness, Staszak states, because it "opposes the abnormality of elsewhere with the normality of here" (6).

Exotic manifestations in literature often reflect subject-positioning between the western self and the exotic Other, according to Roger Célestin, comparative literature professor. That is, the western self claims the authority to crave or reject, to value or devalue a place or a people, based on borders, which are arbitrary social constructs to begin with. The humanities professor, Leisbeth Minnaard quotes Célestin when he explains how this literature can be problematic and paradoxical in that " . . . the western self, as the subject of desire, is caught in a process of both attraction and repulsion. According to Minnaard, "The narrating subject experiences both fascination and fear for the strangeness of the exotic other, and often passes these feelings on to the reader" (para, 2).

Each piece of literature discussed in this paper presents exoticism differently. The character of Flor, for example, in *The Long Night of White Chickens*, is a hybrid of exoticism. Her features are exceptional by both American and Guatemalan standards. Her *mestizo* beauty, her orphan status and her cool demeanor, combined with her high level of intelligence and Wellesley education, project her as exotic in the gaze of the white male culture of Boston. She is a desirable conquest, precisely because she is a rare, tropical hybrid, transplanted in American soil. Flor is also highly desirable in Guatemala for precisely the same reasons. Her astuteness, her American education, and her stunning good looks make her stand out because she does not typify the average Guatemalan woman. Flor jokingly refers to herself as "gringafied," understanding that she has qualities characteristically affiliated with whiteness. These markings make her an appealing commodity to Guatemalan men. Flor is representative of Gloria Anzaldúa's "new mestiza" in that she must develop a tolerance for ambiguity and for contradictions. She is an Indian in Guatemalan culture and Guatemalan in Anglo culture, yet she contains elements of both in either culture. In Anzaldúa's words, "Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else" (101). Both American and Guatemalan men see Flor as exotic because she displays unusual and desirable elements that seem to stem from elsewhere, qualifying her as worthy of possession.

Maribel Rivera's exoticism in *The Book of Unknown Americans* is a unique iteration that casts an historical line back to the era of colonization. Maribel is Mexican, also classically beautiful like Flor, but she has suffered a brain injury and her capacity for understanding has been diminished. Her encounters with Garrett Miller echo those of

early conquests of Mexico in that Garrett's sees Maribel as his for the taking. He reflects the ethnocentric propensity to consider himself superior to others who are in the margins of society, based on suppositions about their spatial origins. Maribel has the stamp of the foreign exotic, but also of the primitive, because she is remote and inaccessible due to her injury; she is also powerless to defend herself against Garrett's advances because she is afraid and truly doesn't understand the significance of his actions.

Exoticism takes on a dual role in the Menéndez story, "In Cuba I was a German Shepherd," in that the tourist faction in Miami considers Máximo and the men that play dominoes in the park to be exotic; yet, to Máximo, his homeland, Cuba, is becoming exponentially exotic with each passing year. Máximo and his friends create a spectacle of otherness for tourists (his friends more willingly than Máximo) precisely because they are from a different place and of a different period of time. The tour guide exploits the modern tourists' appetite for an escape to a simpler, more tranquil time by constructing an image of a bygone Cuban era that is not so different than the imaginary American past.

Ironically, when the tourists snap photographs of the Cuban Other, they are, in fact, capturing and fixing an American ideal of an unhurried period, when people had the time to sit and chat and play games together. For the tourists, there is something sweetly sad in the exotic men they see before them, because they are essentially photographing the lives they wish they, as busy Americans, had. Máximo's friends understand and accommodate this fantasy by wearing colorful guayabera shirts and letting cigars dangle from their mouths. They animate their actions and voices in an interpretation of what they assume the tourists are there to see. In Menéndez's story, exoticism becomes a

participatory concept wherein those on both sides of the social construct of us and them, contribute to a hybrid cultural imaginary.

Cuba itself is exoticized in Menéndez's story, because it takes on a mythical significance for Máximo. Máximo is from Cuba, it is a physical space to him; yet, after thirty years or more of absence, he is forced to reconceptualize it in the abstract. Because of his displacement and deterritorialization, Cuba becomes a third dimension of Máximo's identity, a third space steeped in nostalgia, memory and abstraction. Images of his past, not only in Cuba, but also in Miami when his children were growing up and his wife was still alive, manifest in hallucinations that sit with him at his kitchen table or walk through the rooms of his apartment. He is unable to let Cuba go, yet it is impossible for him to experience his homeland in any tangible way; therefore, Cuba becomes the exotic foreign land, the fabled place of his past.

All three of the works discussed in this paper contain some element of the commodification of culture through tourism. The sociologists Claudia Bell and John Lyall claim that "cultures have become global consumer items," and that beautiful landscapes are a tourist attraction because nature "may be enjoyed in both passive and active ways and by all age groups and nationalities; it requires no knowledge of the local language, nor prior experience, and no special training, or education; and it is not gender-specific, it is apparently apolitical and has no inherent construction costs" (4). Tourists often seek Otherness from a safe distance, that of the tour bus, for example, or stemming from the knowledge that they will soon be home and able to enjoy all the accouterments to which they have grown accustomed and comfortable.

In Goldman's *The Long Night of White Chickens*, there is little mention of tourism except for one particularly significant passage describing international hippie tourists that seek ancient wisdom near a lake surrounded by volcanoes. Their foray into the sublime involves the use of hallucinogenic mushrooms, which they can buy from locals or order cooked into their omelets from café menus. Like most tourists, they want to enjoy a maximum amount of pleasure in a compressed amount of space and time. Bell and Lyall quote the historian and environmental studies professor, Roderick Nash, who explains that "The idea of nature was entwined with the idea of empire, race relations, gender relations, and social order; the idea of nature has within it a sense of otherness in which wildness is quite separate from the civilized centre" (7). The tourists Roger Graetz describes in Goldman's novel happen to be German, but with their propensity for wearing native clothing as they hike, and for drinking and dancing their nights away in reggae bars, they reflect any postmodern tourist who, despite any claims to the contrary, is seeking a homogenized, sanitized experience that he or she can put into photo albums and display on coffee tables. The experience in a foreign country becomes a point of reference, after which they can refer to specific years by the countries they visited.

Cristina Henríquez's mention of tourism is brief in her novel as well, but is significant, in that it is representative of a wider issue. One of the eleven narrators, Micho Alvarez, makes the point that people like to tell him that they've been to Mexico because they took a trip to Acapulco back in the day or to Cancún. Alvarez, originally from Mexico, pointedly notes that visiting a resort is not the same as visiting a country, but rather, it is participating in commodifying that country into a sellable package. The popular practice of staying in all-inclusive compounds in any given place produces

homogeneity and an interchangeable feel to most host countries. Bell and Lyall point out that being shepherded through successive picturesque vistas by tour guides reduces a country to stopping points, and the people who live there to photo ops (9).

The tourists on the little bus that drives along the fenced-in Domino Park in "In Cuba, I Was a German Shepherd" represent a type of tourism that " . . . is about expanding the space of home rather than visiting the Other" as described by the anthropologists Coleman and Craig (2). Tourists are witnessing something that is authentic, to some degree, as the men in the park do play, and enjoy playing, dominos. Sightseers are also viewing the inauthentic, however, as the men are staging the experience by adding props and gesticulations that are not necessarily genuine. The men's actions become more of a performance of culture based on a reflective response than representative of authenticity. As Coleman and Craig point out, though, performance of this nature does not necessarily carry a narrative of lost authenticity; they suggest that perhaps this type of performativity can also create place through spatial stories (10). Perhaps. The fact that tourists can stay on the bus, or within a few feet of it, though, and are separated from the domino players by a fence, suggests more of a passive relation to cultural interests. Domino Park is an example of Homi Bhabha's Third Space as a place of encounter, the zone between the sender of the message and the receiver, wherein meaning is both translated and negotiated (*Location of Culture* 36). The people on both sides of the equation are participating in creating cultural hybridity.

Language is the fourth thread through which these three works of literature will be analyzed. Depending on how it is used, managed and owned in a story, language can convey cultural messages, make political choices, define relationships between

characters, and clarify or obfuscate the relationship between a character and his or her new or old country. In reference to language Franz Fanon states that to speak is to " . . . assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (1, 2). This notion puts a tremendous burden on writers' choices in language, for there is always the push and pull of the socio-cultural and political implications of language that flow underneath the surface of the words. For writers that speak English as a first language, it makes perfect sense to write in English; yet, Spanish is often the language of their subconscious minds, making it almost impossible to do without. The result is usually code switching, a moving back and forth between English and Spanish, which is a realistic reflection of the way many diasporic people think and write.

All three works discussed in this paper are primarily English texts with a smattering of Spanish, with Goldman's *The Long Night of White Chickens* having the heaviest concentration of Spanish throughout. This is because all three writers are children of diaspora. That is, they were born and educated in the United States, while at least one of their parents came from elsewhere. Goldman's mother was from Guatemala, for example, Henríquez's father was from Panama, and Menéndez's parents were both Cuban exiles. In his essay, "What is 'Minor' in Latino Literature," Rolando Pérez theorizes that every Latino writer is torn between writing in their native tongue or their adoptive language; however, he also points out that many Latino writers write in English, not because it's a choice, but because it is their first language (91).

Pérez Firmat also grapples with the question of language in his work *Tongue Ties*, and states, "The true bilingual is not someone who possesses 'native competence' in two languages, but someone who is equally attached to, or torn between, competing

tongues" (4). Rolando Pérez asserts that although language seems to imply some kind of linguistic dominance and loyalty to *patria*, it is not always clear-cut, not always rational and patriarchal (Pérez 92). He offers the reasonable and realistic thought that switching back and forth from English to Spanish makes English vibrate in a certain way. Language choices go beyond English and Spanish, too, to the meaning and context of what is said between characters and what is left out.

The theoretical lenses for viewing this literature are varied, and include literary, cultural, and social theorists. Homi K. Bhabha, for example, addresses the wisdom that emerges from writers who bear witness to oppression in his conclusion of *The Location of Culture*. He evokes Franz Fanon's ideology on what it means to be "a member of the marginalized, the displaced, the diasporic" (339). Fanon says one is not only overlooked or rendered invisible by the wider culture, but also overdetermined in that the black man's identity is formed not from within, but from without. He has no chance to create an identity independent of the wider culture's preconceived ideas of blackness.

The experience of the black man in America is far different from that of the Latino immigrant; yet, there are overlapping elements between the two in Fanon's philosophy. To a large extent, they are both predestined by white society to represent "Other" in the us/them paradigm. The literature produced by writers of diaspora and displacement necessarily reflect the binary of belonging and rejection. They are writing from a "thirdspace" perspective that includes Lefebvre's "triple-dialectic"—historicality, sociality and spatiality (Soja, 22). In this sense, the real and imagined spaces of the Latino immigrant in America come in contact with those of the wider American culture, and the corresponding literature reflects these intersections. All three writers in this study

make choices that reflect the binaries of belonging and displacement that disrupt identity and undermine self worth and self-determination.

Goldman sets his novel in two countries, the U.S. and Guatemala, whose histories have often transected each other. *The Long Night of White Chickens* uses some of this co-mingled history, with all of its corruption and violence, as a backdrop, but centers on the lives of the characters who are quite literally trying to figure out where on earth they fit in. Flor and Roger both feel the ambivalence of simultaneously belonging and not belonging to a place. They each question aspects of their own identities, as well as the identity of each other, which are all tied into their cross-cultural heterogeneity. Flor responds to Roger, at times, as a naïve American boy, and encourages him to mature. Roger pursues Flor's identity both during her life and after her death, questioning her choices and wondering if she could have succumbed to the corrupt system of adoption and baby-selling in Guatemala, and whether or not her choices had gotten her killed.

Henríquez's novel is set in the U.S., but nearly all of the characters are from various places in Latin America, replicating the hybridity of the postmodern world. The cultural theorist Néstor García Canclini identifies hybridity as " . . . social processes in which discreet structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices" (xxv). These processes may include political or historical events that result in the displacement or deterritorialization of human beings from one land mass to another. In this sense, the apartment building in Deaware where the characters live is a hybrid space; immigrants from various countries, for a multitude of reasons, have come together to live and work in a new country. Their views, their life experiences, their interactions and exchanges are altered by their contact

with each other and with the wider culture. This exemplifies one of Canclini's unplanned manners of hybridization, which he identifies as migration, tourism, and economic or communicational exchange (xxvii). Henríquez's novel, like Godman's rethinks the notion of identity, which stems, at least in part, from hybridization of culture and space.

Ana Menéndez's collection of stories also confronts notions of identity that are tied to political and historical realms, although her stories are fundamentally apolitical. One understands, though, that Máximo and Raúl arrived in America as part of the diaspora that resulted, in part, from the rise of Castro and the sovietization of Cuba. Many of Máximo's jokes have punch lines that focus on people's discontentment with Castro. Ultimately, though, Menéndez is not writing about politics, but the aftermath, and what happens to the identities of people after catastrophic rupture. Máximo is losing his bearings, his sense of place, of purpose and of family. Everything has changed. The displacement from his homeland, combined with passing of his wife, the relocation of his daughters and his retirement from an active life, have left him alone and afraid. He understands that in Cuba, he was fully himself, whereas in the United States, even after decades of living and working, he is still the second class Other.

Americans have a concept of the national self that is defined by what the Other is not. The postcolonial theorist, Sura P. Rath, asserts that the self is always in a quest for self-knowledge, seeking to construct "an ideal Other against which it can articulate its identity, see its own mirror image, an image confirming the subjective view already projected into the consciousness" (Rath). In order to construct and confirm the national self, people look outside their own borders for that mirror image; the idea of race worthiness underpins which groups we accept and which we reject. There is an ebb and

flow to this dichotomy, in that certain groups that were once rejected within America's many social constructions of borders are now accepted, and vice versa.

What diasporic writers like Goldman, Henríquez, and Menéndez do, is deconstruct these borders and break down fixed notions of race, language and nation through their fiction. By layering their stories with fluid elements of time, place, and identity, they render the construction of culture visible. Each of their characters came from a place that is not the same as the one they are now occupying, due to forces beyond their control. Depending on where they are in the continuum of their lives, they experience both sides of the equation of belonging and rejection until, at last, they become the equation.

The undeniable force of history has led to this present point in time and is embedded with notions of nationhood and language and culture that shape individual identities. The U.S. encouraged immigration from its inception, for example, but it particularly valued white Europeans as an almost inevitable or preordained group to help settle the country. In March 1790, the U.S. passed the Naturalization Act, stating that aliens who are "free white persons" of "good moral character" would be considered full citizens after living in the U.S for a two year period (Naturalization Act). Despite the implication that some whites were *not* of good moral character, whiteness and morality were paired, creating a collective association of the two. By making whiteness a primary condition for naturalization, the Naturalization Act projected nonwhites as less worthy or Other.

Most Americans today could not identify what the Naturalization Act was, nor would they see in it any relevance to their lives; yet, it fomented a mythology of

whiteness and privilege that filtered into institutionalized racism and is still present in the American mindset. The sociologist Haj Yazdiha calls on Bhabha's concept of "Third Space of Enunciation," from his work *The Location of Culture*, to explain, as she phrases it, the "flimsy consistency of historical narratives that cultures rely on to draw boundaries and define themselves" (32). Bhabha states,

> It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences– literature, art, music, ritual, life, death—and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value (Bhabha 247).

Bhabha emphasizes the critical significance of how each of these elements is produced by the mechanisms of society and culture, and, as such, is reflective of the systems of value existing in any given culture. Latino diasporic writers are writing in between the spaces of these social boundaries, which include their personal and political histories.

Through their work, Latino diasporic writers like Goldman, Henríquez and Menéndez, expose the insubstantiality of historic constructs and resist the concepts of purity and cultural exclusion by exploring the interstitial spaces in which diasporic peoples live. These writers provide counter-narratives to traditional, embedded notions of nation and belonging. The focus of this paper is to illustrate how Othering, a complex fusion of historical, cultural, social, and spatial elements, manifests itself in literature produced by diasporic writers, specifically those of the Latino diaspora.

CHAPTER TWO
GUATEMALA: *THE LONG NIGHT OF WHITE CHICKENS* BY FRANCISCO GOLDMAN

As a result of the tumultuous history between the United States and Guatemala, Guatemalan diasporic writers tend to be political by nature, rendering a literature of resistance and duality. That is not to suggest that they write with an exclusively political agenda, or even specifically about politics and history; these elements filter into their fiction like a palimpsest that resurfaces in the language, the settings and the characters they choose to summon. Although the wider Latino narrative has, in large part, subsumed the literature of the Guatemalan diaspora, Guatemalan diasporic writers like Francisco Goldman, David Unger, and Edwardo Halfon are gaining attention from scholars in the Latino studies field. Goldman's writing, in particular, is founded in the upheaval of civil war, the trauma of distressed flight from a mother country, and the consequent precarious identity characters form in the U.S., their adopted homeland. Goldman's novel, *The Long Night of White Chickens*, illustrates the complexities of Guatemalan society post-U.S. interventions and subsequent thirty-year civil war and the intricate layers of Otherness accreted on the Guatemalan diaspora in the U.S.

The backdrop of Goldman's novel is infused with Guatemala's volatile political history, effectively creating an empty space for the reader to fill. "*Guatemala no existe,"* one character, Luis Moya, says, and this theme repeats throughout the novel like a mantra. Moya's words, and his seemingly contrary stance, are a call to acknowledge not only Guatemala's existence, but also its historical reality. Characters in *The Long Night*

of White Chickens, along with readers, are challenged to examine and defy all the forces that ultimately usurp and incorporate identity. Goldman places his characters within deeply perspectival ethnic, social, cultural and geographical realms. The social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai reminds us that these concepts are further infiltrated by the dimensions of global cultural flow, which he identifies as "(a) ethnoscapes; (b) mediascapes; (c) technoscapes; (d) finanscapes; and (e) ideascapes" (Appadurai 296). He explains that these are constructs, "inflected very much by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as sub-national groupings or movements (whether religious, political or economic), and even intimate fact-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods and families" (296). Goldman's panoply of people, places and ethnicities, along with the assumptions and insinuations about them, maintains a suspended state of dynamic tension in his novel.

A central figure in Goldman's work, and essential to understanding the dynamics between the characters, is Flor de Mayo de Puac, a young, Guatemalan orphan who has been "given" to the Graetz family as a live-in maid by Roger Graetz's Guatemalan grandmother. Roger Graetz, Flor's young charge, is the son of Ira, a Bostonian Jew, and Maribel, an aristocratic Guatemalan, who loves her country, but has left nonetheless. The family lives in Namoset, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb in the shadow of Harvard University and the Kennedy legacy. After Flor has become part of the family and has worked tirelessly to graduate from Wellesley, she returns to Guatemala where she is subsequently murdered while running a small orphanage. Roger, who had lived in Guatemala for several years as a child, and his long estranged best friend from Guatemala

City, Luis Moya, set out to solve Flor's murder. Roger's search for the truth is, in essence, part of his mourning process, not only for Flor, but also for Guatemala.

At the forefront of Goldman's work is Roger Graetz, the protagonist, who is very much based on Goldman's own experiences as a young man. Both are from Guatemalan, Catholic mothers and Jewish fathers, and both grew up in the suburbs of Boston, Massachusetts. Roger navigates his way through the pockets and pitfalls of small-town culture in Namoset, Massachusetts, and as he matures he begins to recognize how he is seen by others and what assumptions are being made about him based solely on his physical characteristics. Goldman calls Roger Graetz's boyhood "an admittedly autobiographical depiction" in his essay, "Moro Like Me," and explains how people cannot seem to fathom his [Goldman's] being both Guatemalan and Jewish, not to mention American, pinning suppositions on him based on one identity or the other. He comments, "But attributing personality traits simply to ethnicity really does strike me as a little far-fetched. National characteristics, cultural or even geographic ones–a sense of place—have more resonance" (*Half and Half* 65). Perhaps that is why the element of place is both central and elusive in *The Long Night of White Chickens*; whether characters are in Pastelería Hemmings in Guatemala City, or in some Kenmore Square singles bar in Boston, the binaries of power and subjection are invested in each place, smudging the borderline between the two. The settings in Goldman's novel are never just about the location, but rather, the feel or the weight of place, the simultaneous connectivity and disjuncture of everyday life.

In the borderlands between Guatemala and America, between belonging and not belonging, Roger Graetz is surprised to recognize himself as Other, not only in one

country, but in two. Growing up, Roger spends his summers in Guatemala at the American Ann Hunt School. When he first sees that his peers categorize him as Other, he is perfectly content to identify himself as such. He says,

> I was American. I wanted to be regarded as nothing other than a Gringo American those summers at Ann Hunt . . . I was flabbergasted and enraged by all these imperturbable Guatemalan kids who thought themselves frankly superior to me, even racially superior! They were richer, most were even *whiter!* (Goldman 26).

The geographical space that Graetz occupies includes, for him, the irrationality of presumptions about what it means to be American, what it means to be Guatemalan, and the established corresponding place on the social hierarchy for each. Goldman had some personal experience of this nature while living in Spain, where people constantly assumed him to be Moroccan, an ethnic minority often discriminated against. The frustration of having to explain himself on nearly a daily basis led to his conclusion, "The language of ethnic self-consciousness is one of such relentless banality, absurdity—of pigeon-holed *restriction*—in our culture . . . We could use a more inclusive notion of ourselves as being a "mestizo" nation, too" (*Half and Half* 65) Notions of the self are multi-layered and complex, and reducing them to a one-dimensional and rather arbitrary signifier undermines the value of what it means to be human. Soja's concept of thirdspace is applicable here, in that by combining Roger's assumption about his place in the world and his reception by his Guatemalan peers, a space of critical inquiry opens up. Soja questions assumed ideologies on space and spatiality, and considers thirdspace as an interweaving of three levels of human awareness: the social, the historical and the

spatial, suggesting that these elements are both inseparable and interdependent. He defines thirdspace as

> . . . a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space where issues of race, class and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other; where one can be Marxist and post-Marxist, materialist and idealist, structuralist and humanist, disciplined and transdisciplinary at the same time (Soja 5).

In Roger's case, one can be Guatemalan and American, Catholic and Jew; however, Roger, too, as a product of his bicultural experience, has his own set of predetermined notions about race and ethnicity. His shock and anger at being formulated into a specific identity come from a reversal of his perception of what the assumed hierarchy should be. He recognizes himself as Other in Guatemala, but this doesn't bother him at first because he is fully confident in his superior status as an American. He sees, however, that in the eyes of his classmates, he is clearly inferior, especially because he has "the lightly mestizo features of the Arraus," an indigenous people with green eyes and blondish hair. Ironically, Roger would have certainly considered himself of higher social status than a Guatemalan if he were in America, with the exception of Flor, because she was extraordinarily beautiful and intelligent and because he loved her. In Guatemala, though, due to a composite of historical, cultural and social forces, his American superiority does not translate.

In his American school, Roger is mocked, not only for looking different, but also for his awkwardness and lack of athleticism. He insists that he became a Namoset, Massachusetts kid through persistence; he continued to go to the frozen swamp and other places where his schoolmates gathered, and felt he finally fit in. Roger explains that the other boys either no longer cared that he was dissimilar, or had decided to tolerate the ways in which he was different. He states, "I really had become just like them, in every way that seemed to matter . . ." (346). In essence, acceptance comes through total integration or assimilation into the dominant culture, which often entails a negation of the self. Roger reveals that his house is referred to as Copacabana, that his mother's décor was considered eccentric, that he was regularly called a "spik," and that he would often acquire temporary nicknames like Juan Valdez. Roger's acceptance, then, of his comfortable place among his peers, is dubious. Even though he comments that there were plenty of fully Jewish kids around (Roger is half-Jewish), he notes that he was the only Copacabana, meaning the only one with an ethnic *ladinoamericano* tag. To all of this he says "so what?" He states, "I thought it didn't matter when I was called a spik since anyone could see that I wasn't really a spik, I only sort of looked like one" (346-7). Roger's rather ineffectual denial of his Otherness and his "so what" response only serve to highlight the fact that he recognizes himself as Other, even among his closest companions, but there is nothing he can do about it other than accept it. He cannot change his roots.

Roger's feigned indifference to the dominant culture's marginalization of him is a coping mechanism. He is opting out of the dominant racial hierarchy by stating, "I wasn't really a spik," but he readily admits that he "looked like one." His ambivalence

reflects Roger's bifurcation of identity. As a young boy growing up, Roger is trying to navigate the cultural space between Guatemala and the United States as well as attempting to negotiate his own identity. If nation is a narrative, as Bhabha suggests, and narrative implies continuity, then the immigrant and the diasporic individual represent ruptures to that narrative. Roger Graetz, a hybrid of Jewish and Guatemalan descendants, has broken and disrupted the dominant image of what someone from Namoset should look, act, and feel like. To be clear, the term hybrid is used here in the context of cultural studies. Steven Engler builds on Peter Wade's work on this topic and calls the result of diasporic movements *hybridity of encounter* (Engler 546). Peter Wade acknowledges established theories (such as those of Homi K. Bhabha) stating

> There is a current that sees hybridity as potentially subversive of dominant ideologies and practices and leading to the dislocation and destabilization of entrenched essentialisms, often with a focus on racial and ethnic categories and boundaries, and frequently in colonial and post-colonial contexts (Wade 603).

He further suggests that there are two types of hybridity:

> a potentially positive hybridity, which is dynamic, progressive, diasporic, rhizomic, subversive, anti-essentialist, routes oriented and based on collage, montage and cut-and-mix; and a potentially negative hybridity, which is biological, genealogical, kinship-based, essentialist, roots oriented and based on simple ideas of combining two wholes to make a third whole" (Wade 603).

Through Roger, Goldman is asserting the former, while denouncing the latter forms of hybridity.

The dynamic and subversive hybridity Wade refers to implies a continuity of narrative as key to understanding national identity. This continuity is addressed by Ian Chambers in his essay, "Stranger in the House." Chambers discusses the narration of the self, and the collective emphasis on the traditional or Old World paradigm for national identity, which includes "The organic, with its sense of roots, origins, growth . . . spontaneous change and continuity . . . tradition and gradual transformation . . . language, blood and belonging" (44). These are the forces that are acting upon Roger Graetz. Moving from the U.S. to Guatemala and back again disrupts his narrative of self- identity and catalyzes his awareness of Otherness. When Chambers refers to spontaneous change and gradual transformation, he does not mean from without, but from within the dominant culture. For Roger, the dominant culture shifts, depending on place, and within place technology evolves and political lines are drawn and redrawn; media, finance, and even language undergo both sudden and gradual transitions, but they all occur within the narrative of the dominant culture as it undergoes various evolutions. Belonging to a place appears to be part of an organic process whereby "national identities are conceived in sovereignty rather than rights, kinship rather than contract" (44). As Chambers points out, hegemony is always at work; being born with all the elements of a culture, its language, history, customs, and rites, trumps acquiring them through migration. Roger's acceptance, as an adolescent, of the fact that his friends see him as Other in both cultures, is also an acceptance of a subordinate space in the identity he is shaping for himself.

The inverse of Roger's experience with Othering occurs with Flor, as she finds herself exoticized, both in the U.S. and when she returns to Guatemala. Flor is Othered for very different reasons from Roger. She talks to Roger about the wealthy men who want to date her, saying that some of them are okay, but "I'm *so* exotic to them, a *morenita* peasant with too much education, *imaginate*?" (Goldman 77). Roger and Flor both have indigenous ancestry at some point in their past histories, and yet one is considered desirable in both Guatemala and America, while the other is not. Flor often refers to herself as "gringafied," meaning that her years living in Massachusetts, including graduating with honors from Wellesley, and the two years she spent living on her own in New York, shaped her into a very different, and perhaps "whiter," person than the one she otherwise might have become.

Flor is recognized as exotic by both American and Guatemalan men, making her the desirable Other. In Guatemala, Flor represents sexual taboo. By dating her, men are crossing some nebulous, socially constructed boundaries regarding race, class and sexuality. According to Srinivas Aravamudan, "Any notion of the exotic relies on an implicit understanding of a boundary, inside which relative familiarity reigns and outside which the wild things roam" (227). Flor is the "wild thing" the men she dates are hoping to capture. In Guatemala, she is fetishized on one level as the American gringa, on the other as the educated Indio. Her hybridity gives her tremendous appeal.

Flor was equally Otherized by the young, white, Bostonian men during her college years, who wanted to date her. Roger explains how infuriated he would get watching guys hit on Flor, knowing they paid attention to her specifically because she was Other. She is, in their fetishized view of the hot Latina lover, an entryway into an

exotic sexual experience. Roger observes that his Guatemalan friend, Moya, and a Somalian student Moya had befriended at Harvard, had to endure "carloads of teenagers shouting 'nigger'" when they were out walking in Cambridge; yet, he comments, "When some slightly more grown-up version of that sort of Boston boy finds himself thinking he might be on to an exotic lay, that's when you get the flip side" (131). The same type of man would sympathize with Flor, telling her how difficult it must have been for her to come from such a poor country, to have to learn a new language, to deal with snow and cold weather.

Roger finds it disturbing and ironic that the considerations white men give to Flor would never have applied to a dark skinned male. Ethnocentricity is dependent upon the sustained mythology of a dominant culture over a subordinate one, regardless of how little is known about the culture or the individuals involved. The cultural theorist, John Tomlinson suggests that. " . . . the ethnocentric imagination—and the projects of cultural dominance this licensed—is only possible via deliberate construction in relationship to other cultures which are taken as the enhancing mirror of the dominant one" (74). The ethnocentric comparison between the young white men of Boston and the darker skinned Guatemalan or Somalian in Goldman's novel works on a male-to-male basis. Flor is valued differently than Moya and the Somalian student because she is not only female, but is considered exotic, which offsets the balance in the presumed ethnocentric hierarchy. Flor recognizes her power to disrupt the social order, and is able to use it to her advantage.

In Flor's recognition of herself as Other, she is able to rise above the socially constructed images of who or what she should be, and keep her eye on what she wants

out of life—a college education. Flor plays right into Namoset's stereotyped view of her as their pretty, petite, strangely erudite foreign girl, but eventually grows to hate it. Roger comments, " . . . Namoset was never Flor's prison so much as it was the circus of her dexterity that had finally become the frumpiest little one-ring show, into which she still had to step daily for the performances of her interminable adolescence" (Goldberg 347). Flor is fully aware that she is presenting a version of the Other that is nonthreatening, and that reflects the idealized values of the wider culture. That is not to say that she doesn't embrace at least some of these ideals; she clearly does, however, she also consciously resists the formulaic framework into which the wider community is placing her. After all, Flor's history did not start when she arrived at the doorstep of the Graetz's home in Namoset, Massachusetts.

Experiencing her sexual desirability alongside her Otherness, and using both in order to flourish, is something at which Flor becomes adept. Gloria Anzaldúa expresses a similar goal for mestiza women. Anzaldúa notes the difficulty in navigating culture, determining what is of worth and what is not. She encourages mestizas to take inventory, "*Despojando, desgranando, quitando paja* . . . Which is the baggage from the Indian mother, which the baggage from the Spanish father, which the baggage from the Anglo?" Anzaldúa calls for a "conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions . . . ." (104). Flor, like Guatemala, has had a complex history, which can put her off balance and make her uncertain as to her identity and place. Flor seems capable of stripping, shelling and removing the chaff from the wheat, as Anzaldúa expresses, in order to move forward in two realities.

Flor's history, her identity, her language, her skin, her blood, her life, and her death are rooted in the violent history of Guatemala. Flor's father was decapitated by machete when she was only six years old. He was a subsistence farmer, who stole water from a neighboring well for his chickens. The owner of the well was not charged with a crime because his actions were considered a legitimate response to thievery, even though the stolen property was well water. The American legal system would consider the farmer's actions vigilante justice, but the Guatemalan legal system does not. When a child such as Flor lives within a cultural framework wherein this behavior is viewed as reasonable and appropriate, and that child is subsequently displaced from one to the other, she cannot eradicate her lived cultural experience; it will always remain a part of her. The values of her new culture are, at times, in conflict with those of her former culture, creating an uneasy tension within the child's sense of self. By experiencing life in two disparate cultures, Flor is relegated to the status of Other in both.

Flor is driven to a convent in the middle of the night after her father's murder, where she remains for the next seven years. She describes how the nuns took her "sad, torn, red-dotted yellow dress that [she] loved like [her] own skin and had worn day after day . . ." and used it as a cleaning rag (Goldman 158). Flor feels her identity dissolving, and describes the process as such: "The hard calloused soles of my peasant girl feet dissolved too (in this, my first incarnation, my first layer of skin, I was a peasant girl! How easily one ceases to be one!), and I grew the soft feet of a convent girl . . ." (158). The word "reincarnation" implies the death of one life and the rising of another; the word "first" implies that more will follow. Flor is both actor and acted upon in the construction of her identity, not only in Guatemala, but in the U.S. Flor is reincarnated

many times throughout Goldman's novel, which forces her to traverse the treacherous and ever-shifting role as the eternal Other. Growing into adulthood in the Boston suburbs, she has to be more than what people see on the surface in order to be seen at all. The literary theorists Eliana Ortega and Nancy Saporta-Sternbach explain that, " . . . for a subject who is not part of the dominant ideology, construction of the self is a far more complex negotiation. In constructing herself as a subject, the Latina must dismantle the representation of stereotypes of her Self, constructed, framed, and projected by the dominant ideology" (14). Flor's evolution of identity brings her full circle, constructing and deconstructing the mythology of her Self as she moves forward.

Flor's return to Guatemala seems antithetical to everything she had worked so hard to achieve, at least in the gaze of the wider American culture. Roger sees it as an act of preservation. Flor had planned on an eventual return to the U. S., but in one of Roger's imaginary dialogues with her after Flor's death he says, "It was too late to go home, because you'd already come and seen; you knew and had forgotten that '*Guatemala no existe*' and then lost 'all perspective' living with a small country like it was a sick but curable person" (376). Flor's need to cure Guatemala, to preserve the "little victimized lives" of the orphans, was very much an attempt to heal and preserve her sense of self— although Roger questions, "preserve them for what?" Being Other sets up an inner dynamic tension that is exhausting on every level. Guatemala's sadness is Flor's sadness, as autochthonous as her own DNA. The culture into which she was submerged as an adolescent cannot fathom Flor's lived world experience. Even if average Americans were interested in the socio-political landscape of Guatemala, they would most likely turn to their television news and find . . . nothing. In mainstream

America, Guatemala does not exist.

Interplay between the concepts of homeland and tourist destination creates a shifting border between Guatemala and the U.S. Flor and Moya are born in Guatemala and return to it at various points, yet they are products of hybridity between the North American/Bostonian/Harvard culture and that of Guatemala City. Roger, too, has a relationship with Guatemala that is interwoven with elements of "home" and "away." James Clifford indicates that "multi-locale diasporic cultures are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary," but rather, that "the terms *border* and *diaspora* bleed into one another" (*Cultural Anthropology* 304). Roger, Flor and Moya live within the spaces of traditional notions of borders, and are impacted by the cultural perceptions and expectations of the dominant culture in each place.

The element of tourism, while not a major motif in Goldman's novel, gives readers access to the phenomenon of solidarity tourism. In the first chapter, Roger is describing a time five years prior when he was meeting with Moya to reconstruct the events of Flor's life and death. He refers to that summer as the one when Sandinista revolutionaries had taken control of Managua, or according to some, "U.S. President 'Jimmy Castro' let the Sandinistas have it" (19). Roger is expressing a commonly shared world view about the proxy Cold War that was fought between Russia and the U.S. in the jungles of Central America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In his theoretical approach to tourism, Dean MacCannell states, "Modernized peoples, released from primary family and ethnic group responsibilities, organize themselves in groups around world views provided by cultural productions. The group does not produce the world view, the world view produces the group" (30). The international group of travelers who have come to

Central America around the time of the Sandinista revolution sympathize with the world view of the indigenous as the under trodden. Roger describes the tourist scene that summer as follows:

> But in Guatemala, world-wandering international hippies were still filling all the two-dollar-a-night hotel rooms in Panajachel, the tourist town up on the volcano-ringed lake, and ordering the legendary or maybe apocryphal psilocybin mushroom omelets in the Café Psicodelico; you could always tell the Germans because they were the ones who most liked to show their esteem and solidarity with the culture by going around dressed up in Indian *traje*, much of it too small for them, chubby blonde calves protruding like slabs of hairy suet from beneath striped Indian breeches. (19)

Roger's sarcasm suggests that the tourists believe donning the clothes of the Indians is tantamount to an affirmation of their respect and solidarity. Experiences like the one described may have been the beginnings of solidarity tourism, a practice wherein travelers visit a particular place in order to show their support for people on one particular side of a conflict. Tourists may feel that being connected to an historic event such as a revolution gives them a certain cachet, however shallow and ill conceived their efforts to dress like locals may be.

This satiric passage also refers to the postmodern phenomenon of Americans and Europeans, in this case, Germans, vacationing in third-world countries in search of an authentic experience by way of drug tourism. In seeking authenticity, however, they are participating in what MacCannell refers to as cultural production. The hippies Roger

refers to are seeking access to a mind-expanding spiritual experience through the psilocybin mushroom, an ancient shamanic practice. The fact that they are wearing Indian garments reflects the problem of travel and fixity that Clifford refers to in *Routes*. He affirms Franz Fanon's theory that people want to "hold on to certain symbols of the elsewhere, of travel," which he says has more to do with a fetishization of other cultures than with travel or displacement (42).

First world tourists sometimes look for exoticism, adventure, and spiritual exploration in ancient indigenous cultures and practices. They are making a postmodern effort to commodify sacredness, to experience something profound and divine in a two week vacation period, of which they may spend as little as an afternoon at the sacred sight. The movement of masses of people for the purpose of leisure international travel has transformed the nature and the scope of cultural contacts. Tourists, unlike people who may be migrating for other reasons, often have the money and the power to bend a situation to their will, and to receive accommodation from the host culture. In this way, tourists may shape the behavior, the sacred rites, and even the culture of tribal peoples.

Commodification of the sacred, however, can go both ways: indigenous people, in order to secure a revenue stream or stabilize their place in a rapidly changing world, may commodify their own culture and traditions. The anthropologist, Marlene Dobkin de Rios, notes that in Amazon cities, middle class men become "traditional healers" without having gone through any training or apprenticeship period (6). Both sides of the cultural equation propagate false images and twice-removed experiences, and both evoke questions regarding colonialism and the effects of cultural contact between groups on indigenous societies.

While there is no evidence of indigenous Mayans performing shamanic rituals for the tourists in *The Long Night of White Chickens*, Roger is alluding to the fact that sautéing hallucinogenic plants in an omelet is a response by third world Guatemalans to capitalize on a first world need or preference. The image of German tourists getting high and dressing in traditional Indian *traje* is both comical and sad—comical to visualize their "chubby blond calves" protruding from Indian pantalones like big slabs of fatty meat; sad in that that they imagine this mimetic behavior leads them closer to a spiritual awakening. Dobkin de Rios states, " . . . millions of temporary travelers from industrialized nations seek in the margins of the Third World a figment of their imagination, a fantasy of Western consciousness—the exotic, erotic primitive or happy savage" (6). In modern, industrialized societies, where there is an erosion of strong family and community ties, people seek the exotic Other through tourism as something that may lead them back to a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the universe.

The interactions between tourists and natives can be better understood through Doreen Massey's concept of the power geometry of time-space compression. Her article, "A Global Sense of Place" addresses the increasing uncertainty of the word "place" in the global perspective. Frequency of travel, the ability to traverse great distances, the immediacy of correspondence and of world events, the facility to wear clothes and eat foods from all over the world, in essence, has compressed both time and space. Massey states that there is a great deal of movement in the world (people, products, media, technology), but notes that of all the people who are moving and communicating, some are able to control it and use it to their advantage, while others, although also moving, are

powerless. The United Fruit Company, for example, was in a position of power, able to control not only its own movement, but also that of U.S. government forces on a large scale, and consequently, the people of Guatemala, who had no access to power of their own accord. Interestingly, in her article Massey specifically refers to Guatemala when comparing the movement of "jet setters" to that of others. Massey says,

> The refugees from El Salvador or Guatemala and the undocumented migrant workers from Michoacan in Mexico, crowding into Tijuana, to make a perhaps fatal dash for it across the border into the U.S. to grab a chance of new life. Here the experience of movement, and indeed of a confusing plurality of cultures, is very different.

Massey is referring to current immigrants, but immigration is not the only cultural means by which people travel. Tourism is increasingly compressing interconnected spaces, bringing them into closer contact and fusing elements of culture into a more homogeneous sphere. Through the absurd appearance of German tourists at cheap hotels in Panajachel, who try to accomplish a life-long spiritual journey by eating magic mushroom omelets and dressing in Indian garb, Goldman illuminates the postmodern angst and the first world search for meaning in third world indigenous cultures.

For Roger Graetz and his friends, the search for meaning resides within two worlds, two languages. Goldman uses code switching between English and Spanish to smudge borderlines and to create a space that is, to some extent, politicized. Goldman only uses a smattering of Spanish throughout the novel, but the effect is more than just a Guatemalan flavor in his work. The ease with which characters slide smoothly between languages, often within the same sentence, mirrors the everyday speech of many in the

Latino diaspora. This double-language dipping is a common manner of speaking among people who live between two cultures, or what Mary Louise Pratt calls contact zones and Gloria Anzaldúa calls borderlands. In her chapter "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Anzaldúa says, "I may switch back and forth from English to Spanish in the same sentence or in the same word" (78), illustrating the dexterity with which those in contact zones speak. This very close proximity of Spanish and English also creates a sense of intimacy and synergy between languages, and creates a distinctive hybrid identity for the characters.

Goldman's linguistic play illustrates the cultural specificity of language. In the following conversation, for example, Roger and Moya speak predominantly in English, but dip into Spanish according to the need or comfort level:

> *"Como?* exclaimed Moya, in the Omni. *"Vos, como?* . . . You mean calling her back to Guatemala, *vos?"*
>
> "No, not that exactly. I'm talking about who she was. At her most real, she felt artificial too, or something like that."
>
> "Superficial?"
>
> "No— "
>
> "I heard her say this once. All on the surface."
>
> "Sometimes I think we sound like Rocky and Bullwinkle together."
>
> *" . . . Quienes?"*
>
> "Hey Bullwinkle, you're right! Flor was never just a Namoset kid! She was *two* people!"
>
> *" . . . Una esquizofrenca, vos."* (378)

Goldman makes the stylistic choice to italicize the Spanish words in the text, although many current Latino diasporic writers do not. He does not translate the Spanish for English readers in this particular passage, but throughout much of the novel he does, ensuring English only readers accessibility into a linguistically fused space. Also, the positioning of the familiar American children's cartoon characters, Rocky & Bullwinkle, in between lines of English and Spanish reflect the true interconnectedness of not only the languages, but also the cultures. By claiming that Flor was two people, or colloquially schizophrenic, Roger and Moya are uncovering the tip of the iceberg that typifies diasporic identity. That identity is fluid; it belongs to two cultures, two languages and it alternatingly reinforces the authority of one or the other through intimate knowledge of both.

The word *vos* is peppered through virtually all of the dialogue in the novel, to the point where a reader only passingly familiar with Spanish might think it means something other than "you." In English, for example, many words and expressions are used casually to create a feeling of familiarity between speakers. Terms such as "right" or "you know" can be used in a variety of contexts in order to affirm that the listener is in agreement with the speaker. Spanish language expert, Ann Pinkerton explains that in Guatemalan Spanish, however, *vos* does indeed mean "you," but it is used, or seemingly overused at times, between male speakers such a Roger and Moya to indicate solidarity and intimacy (691). Most Guatemalan males would not use the familiar *tu* with other males, because it is considered unmasculine (692). This would be a relatively small linguistic point, except that the extensive use of *vos* between males is so marked in Guatemala that it becomes a key point of identity, and serves to reinforce the friendship

between Roger and Moya. Perhaps the word *vos* is used by Guatemalans in much the same way the word "dude" is used by Americans. Referencing "dude" in his article in *American Speech*, Scott Kiesling states, "The term is used mainly in situations in which a speaker takes a stance of solidarity or camaraderie, but crucially in a nonchalant, not-too-enthusiastic manner" (282). The words *vos* and "dude" are agents of bonding, linguistic signifiers that help speakers to navigate culture.

Goldman uses language to create intimacy between his characters and to invoke a strong sense of place. Roger and Flor speak English at home, because English is the more comfortable tongue for Roger due to his being largely raised and educated in the U.S. English speaking at home, however, is not always reflective of the reality in most bilingual homes. According to a 2014 Pew Hispanic Center report, about 74 percent of Latinos in the U.S. say they speak a language other than English at home. The vast majority of that 74 percent says that the only other language they speak is Spanish (Krogstad and Lopez). Despite this, most Latino diasporic writers write in English, as they are raised in the U.S. and are educated in the American school system. Dr. Lucia Aranda asks the critical question, "So then, why does U.S. Latino literature continue to incorporate Spanish in its texts?" (62). Aranda answers this question by stating that Spanish is an integral part of the Latino community, and that language is a means of preserving cultural loyalty and identification (62). Code switching in diasporic literature serves two purposes according to Aranda: to realistically reflect a linguistic past and/or present, and to afford Latinos a cultural identification (63). The dialogue Goldman uses is twofold: the language is not merely authentic, it also evokes a specific history, culture, and way of being for Guatemalan Americans.

Code switching in Goldman's novel takes on a meta quality, in that the problems of translation in the language are characteristic of the problems of identity for the characters—how to interpret, translate, and communicate oneself in a bifurcated reality. The sociolinguistics professor, Lourdes Torres states that for Latino diasporic writers, " . . . code switching is not only metaphorical, but also represents a reality where segments of the population are living between cultures and languages; literary language actualizes the discourse of the border and bilingual/bicultural communities" (76). Goldman's characters are living in a thirdspace that is created from comingled histories of the oppressor and the oppressed, of English and Spanish, of Otherness and belonging. The contact between the U.S. and Guatemala and their intertwined histories served as a catalyst for the Guatemalan diaspora in the U.S., the writers that are products of that diaspora, and the characters that these writers render.

Goldman's use of language illustrates that, at times, one cannot effectively articulate a concept in a non-native language, because the meaning changes. These alterations may be subtle or substantial, but they do not come from academics; they occur organically from grass roots diasporic groups. In a conversation between Roger and Moya, for example, Moya mentions a young woman from Iceland he had been out with the night before, by using the word *"fijese."* Roger ponders,

> "But how to exactly translate *fijese*? – a word so commonly used here and one so suggestive of a particular Guatemalan something or other as perceived by the Zona10 gringos . . . 'Just Imagine!' is the translation that my Spanish-English dictionary gives . . . "Fix on this" is the way I clearly

> recall Hemingway translating it in one of his stories, which is right too . . . ." (Goldman 281)

Roger recalls that when he had first asked "What is it with all the *fíjeses*?," a middle-aged man sitting at the bar next to him had answered that it usually accompanied bad news. A maid might say something like *Fíjese, I would have dried the laundry if you had asked me to, Don Pete, but you only asked me to wash it?* He explains that his laundry would be neatly folded, sopping wet and heavy, just when he had to go to Costa Rica on business (282). Everyone agreed that Don Pete had captured the meaning of *fíjese* perfectly. Just as *fíjese* resists direct translation, so too, do the characters of Roger, Flor, and Moya. To understand them fully, one must look beyond the immediate text of Goldman's novel to the histories that are carved into the DNA of these characters.

The choice not to translate certain words or phrases does have an important function in Latino diasporic fiction according to the sociolinguists Ashcroft, Gareth and Griffiths. These words not only inscribe difference, but also "They signify a certain cultural experience which they cannot hope to reproduce but whose difference is validated by the new situation . . . The technique of such writing demonstrates how the dynamics of language change are consciously incorporated into the text" (52). "Fíjese," along with other untranslated or difficult to translate words and phrases, becomes the signifier for the true cross-cultural nature of the text and the characters.

The unarticulated parts of language can be as significant as the spoken word. Roger notices a certain artificiality he sees in Flor that comes not from her words, but from what lies beneath them. Initially he is unable to identify its meaning; in time, however, he recognizes this artifice as part of her realness. When he and Moya are trying

to reconstruct Flor's identity after her death, and figure out who she really was, Roger comments, "At her most real, she was artificial too . . ." (378). He explains that Flor has an invisible self, like an amputee who can feel as though a limb is still attached, and who senses there is a happier, unamputated whole person walking around somewhere on a different plane. He says it's not so simple as Flor's coming from Guatemala and being unable to find her true and best self in the U.S., but rather, her identity was part of the confluence of events that brought her there and the impact she had on the lives around her. Roger notices this artificiality from time to time in Flor's character, but he does not see it as negative or positive, just as a part of her.

Artificiality may be a characteristic or the diasporic experience, or more specifically, Flor's diasporic experience. Her body itself is a borderland, a composite of Spanish and indigenous blood, simultaneously oppressor and oppressed. According to Anzaldúa, this conflicting duality breeds a psychic restlessness within the mestiza mind, often resulting in a "counterstance [that] refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs" (100). On one hand, Flor embraced America's values while she was growing up in Namoset. Her constant refrain was "I want to go to college," a widely held ideal, although Roger notices that the repetition of this phrase was so insistent it sounded artificial. He decides that it had to mean something more. Perhaps Flor knew all along that she would return to Guatemala, and that an education was not so much what she wanted as needed in order to effect whatever change she could in her homeland. In this sense, she was not embracing American values as much a she was fulfilling a desire to preserve her homeland.

At times Flor's voice had a false ring to it, a "ping" (Goldlman 356) Roger picks

up on, although it seems to happen when she is being most sincere. After Ira's gall bladder attack puts him in the hospital, for example, Flor takes Roger Christmas shopping at F.A.O. Schwarz. He tells her he wants hockey skates and gloves, and Flor looks at him reprovingly. She tells him he must stop trying to be like everyone else. When she says that all she wants for Christmas is to see Ira get better, Roger detects a note of artifice in her voice. The artificiality Roger acknowledges is, perhaps, part of a self-conscious recognition on Flor's part of occupying one state of being while actively pursuing another. He states to Flor's imaginary presence:

> That jarring little note was caused not by the artificiality of the sentiment, but by the unconscious truth that artificiality was essential to what we had, and lay like silence near the heart of everything . . . maybe you had no other way of expressing the life that had been given to you, or of really knowing it, except by pushing on the boundaries of that artificiality, trying to find where it began and where it ended. (367)

One can conceptualize the pushing against artificial boundaries in another way. Imagine a saxophone player who is learning unfamiliar music. He must read the notes on the page before him, assess the timing, improvise, notice the nuances and interpret and inhabit the sound. He also must let the sound infiltrate him, but the shape of the saxophone is problematic. The bell of the horn is positioned away from the musician. The sound drifts away from him and can become vague or distorted. It can mix with ambient sounds and become fuzzy, less clear. To counter this problem, the player creates an artificial barrier against which the sound bounces and returns to him. This is the reason a saxophone player will often practice in front of a wall or a column in order to

hear himself play. As a diasporic individual, Flor's existence is problematic; she too, is learning unfamiliar cultural "music." The language, sounds, and nuances of her new culture are moving away from her, and she can never be sure that what she is interpreting is the true rhythm of things. She, too, must create artificial boundaries against which she can judge what is true and real. This is what it means to be eternally Other. One must be in a constant state of alertness for signals and sounds that can welcome one in or lock one out.

Moya's statement, *Guatemala no existe* which runs through Goldman's novel like an anthem, also has a false or artificial ring to it and yet within it lies a profound truth. Readers are compelled to examine the seeming audaciousness of the statement; it implies psychic demoralization on both personal and national levels. What does it mean for a country not to exist? First, one must look at the bigger geographical picture: the rivers and roadways; the crashing waves along the coastlines; and the animals, the mountains, the jungles, the lakes, the volcanoes. Then, one considers the smaller things: the little pebbles that collect on the side of the road; the combined aromas of moss and mint; the sounds of birds; and the smells of burning wood and burning garbage. And then, of course, there are the people: binaries of the indigenous and the aristocratic; the colonized and the conquerors; the educated and the illiterate; and the businessmen, the street gangs and the beggars. How is it possible for these things not to exist? Looking through the prism of Edward Soja's concept of real and imagined spaces gives at least some options for interpreting Moya's declaration. Soja encourages us to question as "intrinsically spatial beings," the "interwoven complexity of the social, the historical and the spatial, their inseparability and interdependence" (1-3). In other words, Guatemala's "realness"

does not match the Platonic idea of what Guatemala should be. Guatemala may exist, however, it does so in between the socially constructed binaries.

Soja does not advocate eradicating binaries completely, only looking at them in a new way. He calls this method "thirding as Othering" or critical thirding. The aspect of thirding as Othering that most relates to Goldman's novel is building a creative extension of our view of the material world and interpreting this reality with representations of spatiality. In other words, we must "expand [our] geographical imaginations beyond [their] current limits" (2). In his journey to find Flor's phantom killer, Roger is rediscovering, retracing his own roots. He calls Guatemala the kingdom of his mother's Pride and Nostalgia (Goldman 11), suggesting that the constructs of Guatemala with which he grew up are not necessarily what he accepts as true and real.

Roger recalls that his mother's father was the illegitimate son of Colonel Rogerio Arrau and his mestizo mistress, who could trace her bloodlines back to the Conquest. The evocation of the Spanish Conquest brings a dual reality into play. The "real" Guatemala lies somewhere in between the space of conqueror and conquered. Roger's own identity is also in flux, since he is not of Guatemala, yet he is intimately connected to it. On the other side of the coin, he does not seem to fit into the Namoset, Massachusetts norm. When looking at an old solidarity poster he had purchased of a smiling young Indian, he sometimes romanticizes the idea that his distant relatives were priests, warriors, and slaves that had actually lived among the ancient pyramids. But he checks himself by saying, "I have a minority share in that *raza*. You might as well have told me I had ancestors on Mars" (Goldman 189). Roger's statement illustrates the near complete alienation he feels about Guatemala. He cannot sustain the mythic homeland of

his mother and grandmother and distances himself from his indigenousness past. He is experiencing an existential and sociocultural divide that Cuban scholar Eliana Rivero refers to as a permanent unresolved dualism (170), and by denying the indigenous part of his heritage, he is nullifying an integral part of himself.

Directly after Flor's funeral in Namoset, Roger rolls the poster up and throws it into his closet with "the rest of Guatemala" (Goldman189). Roger's gesture is symbolic—a closing off of the past, a decision to live apart from Guatemala internally and externally. Octovio Paz refers to this mindset in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, as " . . . a secret conflict we have not resolved" (87). He is referring to a desire for some Mexicans to reject both their Spanish and indigenous ancestry and "renounce [their] origins and live in isolation and solitude" (87). Roger does not want to be descended from indigenous Guatemalan priests and warriors; he rejects them. Paz's theory on the similar Mexican rejection of Spanish and Indian heritage is, "He denies them. And he does not affirm himself as a mixture, but rather as an abstraction: he is a man. He becomes the son of Nothingness. His beginnings are in his own self" (87). Roger, too, is becoming his own self, and beginning the arduous process of self-awareness that could only be actualized through Flor's death.

Flor was the living, breathing embodiment of Guatemala; and as she lay dying, for Roger, Guatemala lay dying. In a hotel room he shared with his father when they went back to Guatemala to retrieve Flor's body Roger states, "But it was already starting—*Guatemala no existe*—that night in our hotel room, when I felt so many of the embarrassing certainties, obsessions, gravity, and even love already seeping away . . . " (189). Since Flor no longer exists, neither does Guatemala. On some level, the identities

of both Roger Graetz and Guatemala are ethereal in nature, composites of myriad influences, and at any given point in time do not fully exist.

Guatemala's reputed communist ties were nebulous. In order to protect U.S. business interests, the Eisenhower Administration and the C.I.A. forged an effective propaganda campaign against Guatemala's democratically elected, but left-leaning, president, Colonel Jacabo Arbenz. Roger's Guatemalan grandmother, or Abuelita, did her own part to liberate Guatemala from Arbenz's alleged Communist regime by defying a government-imposed blackout in 1954. Along with many like-minded Guatemalans, she lit a charcoal fire in her patio pit and fanned the flames, showing her patriotism and lighting a path for Castillo Armas's National Liberation invasion force airplanes. Roger points out, however, "Of course, Abuelita had no way of knowing that those were C.I.A.-provided and mercenary-piloted planes, that Castillo Armas couldn't have had less to do with them if he'd tried . . ." (Goldman 201). Roger's Abuelita is representative of some sectors of Guatemalan peasants who were sufficiently propagandized into believing that Arbenz was a communist, and therefor supported the opposition. Years later, when Roger and Moya visit Abuelita's old home and see the Black hole of charred remains on the patio, Roger comments, "So much of what Guatemala is living now . . . entered this country through this hole in my grandmother's patio" (213). In an apropos metaphor, Roger is identifying what Guatemala is through a negative space, a charred hole in an old woman's patio. If one extends this metaphor to a national identity, and then still further to an individual identity, rather than a construction of self, one perceives, at best, a deconstruction of self, at worst, an obliteration of self.

Self-annihilation occurs on a more personal level after Flor's death. Roger experiences identity in reverse; that is, he initiates a deliberate melting away of who he is, or was, based on what he knows to be true and real. This implies a figurative erasure of Guatemala as well, reiterated by Moya's periodic refrain, *Guatemala no existe*. Guatemala has always been an intrinsic, if not dual, part of Roger's identity, a source of pleasure and of pain, pride and loathing. In order to recover from the pain of Flor's death, Roger claims he needs to "clean Guatemala out of [his] life," stating, "Soon I felt I didn't even have a history. I didn't know what I was trying to heal. Had I lost a relative, a sister . . . a best friend? A myth? A metaphysical lover? A lie? My own history?" (Goldman 228). The act of emptying himself of Guatemala, in effect, leaves him in a state of identitylessness. From this point on, Roger has to renegotiate and reinterpret his own identity.

Francisco Goldman, himself the son of a Guatemalan mother and a Jewish father, structures the narration of the novel from Roger Graetz's point of view, but also sets up many pressure points of resistance. Roger conveys, for example, that he and Flor were raised in the shadows of two kingdoms—Harvard and the Kennedys on one side, and ". . . the empire of my mother's Nostalgia, a whole other fairy tale . . ." on the other. Both of these fairy tales end in violence, although for Guatemala, the violence is constant and prolonged. The title of the novel is a metaphorical nod to this violence. The "long night" refers to the night that Flor and Moya were first getting to know each other at a small restaurant in Guatemala. They get drunk together and talk all night, occasionally kissing—first in a flirtatious way, then deeply. Towards the end of the night, as they are talking, they see three Indian men walking rapidly into the kitchen of the restaurant,

carrying live, white chickens by their feet. The men repeat the action many times. Flor comments that Frank Perdue probably doesn't lead his chickens to slaughter one by one, and says, "But everything gets done here in some stupid, slow, and inevitably cruel way" (314). Her statement foreshadows her own death, with her throat slit as she lies in bed.

Flor leads Moya into the kitchen of the restaurant where they witness the following:

> There, the entire floor of that cramped, reeking, damp, otherwise gray and dank kitchen, every inch was crammed with live, dumb, white, red-eyed chickens. Barefoot kitchen girls, Indians in shapeless gray smocks, were already at work, one of them wading through the chickens, picking them up one at a time and snapping their necks, while another two stood over the metal washtubs, plucking the dead chickens. (315)

The image is disturbing. The business of death serves as a backdrop while people are getting drunk and falling in love. In a broad, overarching sense, Goldman may be alluding to the killing of Guatemalan innocents in this passage; in a narrower sense, noting that the chickens are carried in two by two, upside down, may be reflective of the chaotic world in which Moya and Flor find themselves, perhaps foreshadowing Flor's death, a slitting of the throat at the hands of an unknown assailant. The title, *The Long Night of White Chickens,* evokes the violence that permeates Guatemala to this day.

The novel moves back and forth in time, with only a sub-structure of a traditional timeline. Additionally, the story unfolds in both the U.S. and Guatemala, placing the characters and the reader in two vastly different spaces. Although Roger is the narrator, Goldman incorporates imaginary dialogues Roger holds with Flor after she has died. He

also uses internal monologues, notes, and journal entries from Flor as part of the narrative. In this sense, the structure of novel reflects the diasporic experience; it is neither *aquí* nor *alla*, transcending boundaries of time, space and place.

Goldman's personal history is closely tied to that of Guatemala's, which infiltrates his work on every level. In an essay Goldman wrote about his mother, he tells how General Ubico had expelled Germans from Guatemala and seized their coffee plantations. In his essay, "¡Mamita Linda!," Goldman writes, "In 1944, General Ubico was toppled, ushering in Guatemala's golden decade of reformist and even revolutionary democracy, which was ended the very year I was born, by the United Fruit Company and the C.I.A. in the coup of 1954" (*Las Mamis* 126). Goldman is a product of a hybridity of cultures, countries, and histories, and his writing reflects the thirdspace characteristic of diaspora.

In the same essay, "¡Mamita Linda!," Goldman tells a compelling story about his mother, a privileged and proud daughter of Guatemala who went to college in the U.S. She remained a Guatemalan citizen, even long after marrying, having children and settling in a Boston suburb. Only towards the end of the 1990s did Yolanda Goldman suddenly change her mind and become a U. S. citizen. Much to Goldman's surprise, he overheard his mother tell people that it was only after an award ceremony during which he had won a prize for one of his novels that she decided to officially change her national status. He writes, "she had only decided to become a U.S. citizen after that first awards ceremony at the Folger Library because seeing her son so honored there and treated with such respect had made her finally feel accepted in the United States" (Santiago 134). Accepted. This word gave Goldman insight into the decades in which his mother must

have felt not accepted, and into all the meaning packed into that little word. His writing, and much of Latino diasporic writing necessarily wrestles with the theme of acceptance, and what it means to those who find themselves living outside its many implications.

In an interview with Miwa Messer, Goldman reveals, "My first novel, *The Long Night of White Chickens*, grew out of my immersion, beginning in 1979, in the war and nightmare repression in Guatemala." Latino diasporic literature emerges from a sense of place and placelessness, of rupture and recovery, of actor and acted upon—all set within the paradigm of us and them. Readers are left with the disturbing thought that the Guatemalan immigrant is forever destined to be designated as Other, and that the immigrant herself recognizes that she is seen as such. The confluence of all the violence, mistrust, and constructions of Otherness solidify specifically in Goldman's novel and generally in Latino diasporic fiction.

At one point in the Messer interview, Goldman states, "In U.S. discourse, immigrants are mostly represented as less than human, a policy problem, or as just that, a category, and categories are prisons." Due to political rhetoric, bias, and fear, many perceive immigrants as problematic to national security. The very word "nation," as Leo Chavez points out, derives from the Latin, meaning, "to be born." The American idea of being born into a nation is challenged and possibly threatened by those who are denationalized or deterritorialized through acts of politics, war, economics, violence, and nature. The irony here is that any given American family can trace their roots to elsewhere. Diasporic Latino writers are ultimately writing about the movement of people, the histories, the politics, the personal experiences, and the gaze of the wider,

dominant culture, where and how they see themselves both within that gaze and outside of it.

In summary, Francisco Goldman's *Long Night of White Chickens* shifts between past and present, giving readers a sense of becoming unmoored from traditional linear narratives. Goldman sets his novel in both Guatemala and the United States, accessing a true sense of the diasporic bicultural experience. The concept of recognition of the self as Other surfaces in two of the main characters, Roger and Flor, each seeing a distorted reflection of who they are in the gaze of the wider culture. Both are also conscious of Flor's exoticization in American and Guatemalan cultures. Flor is valued differently than Roger because she is the enigmatic comingling of peasant and scholar, of repulsion and desirability. Tourism surfaces briefly in the novel, extending the fetishization of the exotic beyond the personal to the national and cultural. Goldman's use of language provides specificity to Guatemalan Spanish and culture, bringing to life characters that have qualities of both realness and ethereality, because they are amalgamations of disparate political, social, and cultural influences.

CHAPTER THREE
PANAMA: THE BOOK OF UNKNOWN AMERICANS
BY CHRISTINA HENRIQUEZ

The literature of the Panamanian diaspora in the U.S. reflects the divided nature of living in a transisthmian culture, the myriad influences on the Panamanian people due to the ebb and flow of both individuals and nations through their country, and the cultural erosion and psychological trauma created by U.S. domination of Panama for many years (De Guzman 155-157). It is unsettling for a nation to be perceived as a passageway, to be used for the world's convenience, rather than as a country. Perhaps it is fitting, then, that Christina Henríquez's novel, *The Book of Unknown Americans,* features a host of narratives from not only Panama, but also from other Latin American countries with diasporas in the U.S. Henríquez's title reflects the thirdspace identity felt by many Latino-Americans, and the melding of cultures that occurs when economic forces are a driving factor, first in Panama, then in the U.S.

Henríquez employs eleven narrators from various countries including Mexico, Guatemala, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, and Argentina whose lives interconnect because they all live in the same apartment building in Delaware. Together, they form an internal colony hybrid, which, according to indigenous scholar Keri Iyall Smith, occurs when people form a small society living within a larger one (10). They are working class people, many of whom are laborers, who follow the rules and cultural dictates of the dominant culture, but who also strongly want to maintain their own national identities and customs. The postmodern geographer and theorist Edward Soja suggests that there are "thick layers of macrospatial organization arising not just from

administrative convenience but also from the imposition of political power, cultural domination, and social control, over individuals, groups, and the places they inhabit" (*Seeking Spatial Justice* 32). The inhabitants of colony hybrids such as the one described by Henríquez are coming from distinct cultural, filial and national situations, but each are acted upon by forces that are not immediately apparent.

Mayor Toro emigrated to the U.S. from Panama with his family when he was less than a year old. As his life intersects the lives of those around him, he begins to understand the meaning of Otherness. The Toro family has become displaced and deterritorialized due to the violence, poverty, and chaos in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Panama. In 1989 the U.S. sent approximately 24,000 troops into Panama in order to remove Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega, by force (Pike 339). The historian Frederick Pike addresses the violence of the U.S. invasion and the shattering effect it had on Panamanian people. He states, " . . . the destruction occasioned by the invasion, combined with the devastating effects of economic sanctions that the United States had imposed during the prior two years . . . literally destroyed much of Panama's economic base" (340). The Toro family was one of many caught up in the turmoil. Rafael Toro, Mayor's father, explains, "We went weeks without leaving the house. We were eating toothpaste by the end of it. There was static on the television. We didn't know what was going to happen. Then we heard from a neighbor that Noriega was gone" (22). He further details the shock of seeing burnt-out cars, rubble of buildings, broken glass and charred palm trees. The family stayed for three years, trying to rebuild their lives, but Toro says they never felt safe again. He also admits to a feeling of embarrassment at his country's not being strong enough to resist what had happened to it;

this discomfiture equates to a feeling of emasculation for Toro at the same time he is forced to sever ties with his homeland.

Despite having grown up almost entirely in the U.S., and being educated in English-speaking schools, Mayor feels very much like an outsider. He doesn't quite fit in at school, and his classmates call him Major Pan (short for Panamanian), Major Pan in the Ass, and other names. Initially, Mayor's experiences may seem no different than what any other adolescent goes through; most do not come through middle school and high school unscathed. Placing the locus of the individual's identity outside of the country, however, in a foreign or sinister context, affects the perception of that individual by those around him. The word "sinister" is used here because that is clearly the intent of the actors in this case and in most cases where foreign dictatorships and countries in crisis are evoked to mark the identity of the person being Othered. As Rafael Pérez-Torres points out in his essay, "Ethnicity, Ethics and Latino Aesthetics," " . . . given the conflation of race and nationality in this country, Latinos are assigned a minority, stigmatized position, not one transformed by dreams of perpetually floating identities, cosmic justice, or even the triumph of demographics" (540). Unlike students who may be labeled as nerds by their peers in grammar school, and who later are able to embrace a more positive self-image in high school, students of diaspora cannot change the physical, spiritual and emotional reality of where they, or their parents, are from. Mayor is constantly reminded that he is different in a way that other children who are bullied are not—he is stigmatized as Other on a very fundamental level in that he is not from *here*.

Mayor confesses that he doesn't feel Panamanian, although his dad has assured him that his Panamanianness is inside him, in his bones. He says he tried to find it inside

himself, but couldn't. Mayor is identifying with the dominant culture in which he was raised. He states that he felt more American than anything, but kids at school would taunt him, asking him if he was related to Noriega. Mayor sees himself as something beyond the self by acknowledging, "The truth was that I didn't know which I was. I wasn't allowed to claim the thing I felt and I didn't feel the thing I was supposed to claim" (Henríquez 78). The "thing" Mayor is referring to is identity. His identity is in flux because his sense of self is dependent upon his socialization and acculturation into an existing system. He feels, in his bones, like an American. Yet in the gaze of the wider culture, he is foreign, Other. His awareness of this is akin to Adrienne Rich's concept of "psychic disequilibrium." Otherness, though, does not necessarily only come from the new culture an immigrant is introduced to, it can also come from the old culture the immigrant comes from. These spheres overlap and comingle, becoming part of a diasporic, pluralistic space. Appadurai states that these diasporic public spheres "constitute one special diacritic of the modern global" (Appadurai 11). It is within this interconnectedness of space that Mayor and all of the characters in the apartment house operate, negotiating their lives between global, national and local influences.

Mayor's ambivalence about his identity is a common phenomenon for many diasporic people. Homi K. Bhabha acknowledges the "instability of cultural signification" and asserts that culture comes from many varied influences and temporalities (Bhabha 303). Mayor is experiencing life on two levels simultaneously: his identity is in flux because he is a teenager in the process of forming his sense of self, shaped by family, teachers, friends, and cultural influences; his identity is additionally in flux because he is not rooted firmly in either culture. The Panamanian and American

principles within him are in conflict, each trying to subordinate the other. This struggle comes from within and from without. Clifford notes that the making and remaking of identities, such as Mayor's, "takes place in the contact zones, along the policed and transgressive intercultural frontiers of nations, peoples, locals. Stasis and purity are asserted—creatively and violently—*against* historical forces of movement and contamination" (7). Mayor cannot feel fully American or the Panamanian, which has a destabilizing effect on his identity and on his sense of place in the world.

Mayor's father, Rafael Toro, experiences being Othered by his former culture when he plans to return to Panama for his high school reunion. Significantly, he recognizes that although he considers himself Panamanian, friends who are living in Panama no longer consider him part of their culture. "Rafa" is averse to taking time off from his job for any reason, as he understands that "he is on the low end of the food chain," even though he and his wife, Alma, have become U.S. citizens (Henríquez 79). However, he gets swept up in the excitement of returning to Panama, if only for a weekend, to reunite with his old friends. When he calls to respond, the man on the phone tells him, "We'll roll out the red carpet," which confuses Rafael at first, but when the man follows up with "We didn't know the gringo royalty was coming. We'll have to get the place repainted before you arrive," the message is clear. He sees that in the gaze of his former countrymen, he is no longer one of them, he has become a gringo; yet in his new country, he is not fully accepted either, he is just another immigrant.

In his study of Cuban-American culture, *Life on the Hyphen*, Gustavo Pérez Firmat relates the experience of not feeling at home in either cultural location, which can be applied to Mayor and Rafa. He says that "Spiritually and psychologically you are

neither *aquí* nor *allá* . . . Having two cultures, you belong wholly to neither one" (6). Not only does Raphael's new American culture see him as Other, friends and loved ones from his home country now also see him as something foreign, something of which to be wary. This is a genuine revelation for Raphael; an ironic recognition of the self as Other from a very unexpected source—his compatriots, people to whom he thought he belonged.

Maribel, the stunning but mentally compromised sixteen-year-old daughter of Alma and Arturo Rivera, is exoticized for her Mexican beauty and for her newness to her school community. She also is the physical embodiment of inaccessibility, in that she is literally "unreachable," due to her brain injury, giving her a dark, mysterious quality. When the idea of exotic objects first emerged in the Western consciousness, it was a response to travel and exploration (Jenkins 2). People wished to possess exotic items because ownership gave them access to a fantastic world. The cultural theorists Christa Knellwolf and Iain McCalman state that while the objects themselves are authentic, "they were appropriated by the narratives of those who owned them and tamed their potentially frightening otherness through possession" (3). In the same way, colonized women's bodies were objectified. They were considered "violable and rapable" because, as Andrea Smith explains, "In patriarchal thinking, only a body that is 'pure' can be raped" (73). It is this patriarchal gaze through which Garrett sees Maribel, and feels he has the right to her body.

Possession of the exotic is a desire or an intrinsic need to tame. Early European explorers felt a need to conquer the jungle, to domesticate the wild, and to convert the indigenous to a civilized, often meaning Christian, lifestyle. Garrett Miller's crude advances, and his willingness to take sexual advantage of Maribel, who is at a

disadvantage, evoke colonization. As the racial theorists Omni and Winant point out, "racial formation is always historically situated" (112). Garrett's lack of consideration for the thoughts or desires of Maribel, and his focus on conquest alone, echoes the division of Europeans and Others imposed by early European explorers. The fact that Maribel cannot communicate her objections, and stands numbly by as he taunts her in one scene and lifts her shirt in another, only gives him more of a sense of entitlement—to her body, to her natural, primitive, self.

When Mayor asks his friend William if he has seen the new girl (Maribel) at school, William realizes that "she must be hot" (Henríquez 38). He taunts Mayor, asking "Is she a hot taquito? . . . A hot taquito for little Mayorito . . . All soft and warm inside." William's language is more reflective of an articulation of the male gaze than of racial bias, yet it does reference Maribel's Mexican heritage in a pejorative way. While Maribel is beautiful, and therefore desirable, she is also considered an exotic transplant. Professor Jennifer Esposito explains, "Even though the Latina is often represented as attractive and sexually desirable, she is still Othered to the extent that her body will always be a source of curiosity and fascination as an exotic object" (Aldama, Sandoval and García 330).

If the overprivileging of white males in a patriarchal system objectifies white women, Latinas are twice objectified, as their gender is also racialized. Latina women such as Maribel are marginalized in relation to dominant constructions of whiteness and, as such, are devalued by the wider culture (Guzmán, Valdivia 206). Garrett, Mayor, and Maribel all play archetypal roles within the framework of race, gender, and sexuality, yet they do so on a subconscious level. Garrett's role is that of the colonizer. He sees himself

as having the unquestionable right to take what he wants and is determined to dominate those who look easily controllable. Maribel's role is that of the sexualized, racialized exotic. She does not understand the actions of the aggressor, therefore is at risk of harm. Mayor's role is also that of the colonized, but he recognizes the threat clearly and defends his territory by standing up to Garrett. All three characters are part of the transcultural and intercultural exchange that has its roots in the history of conquest and colonization. Omni and Winant theorize that this relationship cannot be overstated. They state, " . . . just as the noise of the "big bang" still resonates through the universe, so the overdetermined construction of world 'civilization' as a biosocial manifestation of European subjugation and the resistance of the rest of us still defines the race concept in the present" (115). The actions/reactions of Henríquez's characters are informed by the wider culture, which has in turn been shaped by the histories between their countries: Mexico, Panama, and the U.S. Garret has come to the apartment house where Maribel and Mayor live with their families, despite not living in that neighborhood nor having any social contact there. He does not see himself as breaching their territory, since he is entitled to explore at will.

Garrett's stalking of Maribel is reflective of predator and prey and his actions escalate as the novel progresses. In one scene he takes her sunglasses and holds them over her head (Henríquez 70-71). Mayor observes, "I watched as Garrett took a step back and surveyed Maribel from head to toe, nodding in appreciation. She didn't squirm, she didn't shift, she just let herself be ogled" (70). Due to her brain injury, Maribel cannot contextualize Garrett's gaze as predacious. In the same way that naked indigenous people were deemed primitive savages by their colonizers, Garrett sees

Maribel as animalistic because she is not displaying shame or embarrassment in his presence. Shame of one's nakedness is one of the foundational narratives based on the Old Testament depiction of Adam and Eve recognizing their nakedness after they had sinned. Maribel is not naked, but under the penetrating and sexual gaze of Garrett, she is figuratively laid bare and does not flinch. Imperialist ideology interprets passivity as compliance, and Garrett sees Maribel as his for the taking.

Garrett's presumed entitlement to Maribel's body is reflected in his dialogue with Mayor:

> "She a good lay? I bet she is. I bet you can do whatever you want to a girl like that."
>
> "Stop it."
>
> "I've been thinking about all of the things I could do to her. Tell her to take her clothes off –"
>
> "Stop."
>
> "Have her suck my dick—" (128).

At this point, Mayor strikes Garrett. Garrett's idea of doing something to Maribel, without any shame or explanation on his part, reflects the constructed logic of the white patriarchal male to colonize the indigenous body. Mayor's response may also seem patriarchal, in that he wants to protect a woman to whom he is also laying claim, but his reaction is both natural and understandable, since he is defending a person he cares for against a bully. Mayor and Maribel are from very different places, Panama and Mexico respectively, but they share a common language and their countries share a history of colonization. This commonality is identified by the sociologist Felix Padilla, who uses

the term Latinismo to identify an ethnic consciousness arising out of the interaction of two or more Latino groups within a given situation, such as the one Mayor, Maribel, and their families share. They relate to each other in a way that people who are not part of the Latino diaspora cannot.

Tourism and the media work in tandem to create a sense of Otherness, which surfaces in Henríquez's novel, through the voice of Micho Alvarez. In the most political chapter, Micho Alvarez, a Mexican immigrant, writer, and immigrants' rights advocate, clearly recognizes himself as Other. He addresses the construction of the Mexican identity through the media and through tourism. When confronted with negative stereotypes, Micho asks people if they've ever even been to Mexico. Some answer that they've been to Cancun or Acapulco. He corrects them by saying that they've been to a resort, not to Mexico and, according to Micho, "that's the problem" (236). To vacation in Mexico, or in any number of countries, particularly Caribbean island nations where tourists stay in all-inclusive fenced-in compounds, is to avoid contact with a country and its people altogether. Tourists typically take pictures of colorful "native" dancers that perform for them on the hotel grounds at night or serve them brunch on a private beach, but as Susan Sontag notes, "To photograph is to appropriate the thing being photographed . . . [to put] oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and therefore, like power" (Sontag 4). What Micho Alvarez is objecting to, then, is the presumption of knowledge of a place and a people because one has had a brief, sanitized, prepackaged, and pseudo experience of them.

Wealthy people from developed nations go to foreign places in an attempt to experience the exotic. Yet many do not want to stray too far out of their comfort zone, so

they look for familiar accommodations, food and standards. The entire experience is false, and, in order to maintain this façade, people who live in tourist-destination countries work hard to perpetuate an image of an image; that is, they are not representing their true reality, but, rather, they are trying to match the image they believe people will pay money to see. The tourist and the toured create a space of hybridity, that is based neither on the pure Mexican cultural experience (not that such a thing exists), nor on the American tourist gaze; instead, a new sphere or thirdspace is produced through the projections and assumptions each culture has about the other.

In reference to the burden of performing the role of the ever-smiling, ever-accommodating Mexican (or Dominican or Puerto Rican, etc.) sociologist Patricia de Santana Phino states, "Ultimately this unevenness contributes to defining the "place' of each nation in global configurations of power, establishing "hospitality" and the "tendency to serve" as "national characteristics" of Caribbean and Latin American countries" (de Santana Phino 70). These stereotypes can only occur in geographical landscapes that have uneven distributions of power. The anthropologist and geographer David Harvey asserts that '"Difference and 'otherness' are *produced* in a space through the simple logic of uneven capitol investment, a proliferating geographical division of labor, an increasing segmentation of reproductive activities, and the rise of spatially ordered (often segregated) social distinctions" (295).

In tandem with his thoughts on tourism, Micho notes that American ideas about Mexicans are based on the media, "and the media . . . has some fucked-up ideas about us" (236). He clarifies his use of the word "us" as referring to all brown skinned people, but especially Mexicans. He states,

> You listen to the media, you'll learn that we're all gangbangers, we're all drug dealers, we're tossing bodies in vats of acid, we want to destroy America, we still think Texas belongs to us, we all have swine flue, we carry machine guns under our coats, we don't pay any taxes, we're lazy, we're stupid, we're all wetbacks who crossed the border illegally (236).

Micho states that he's tired of being called a spic and other derogatory names, and he wants to tell store clerks that he is a citizen and has the right to be in any store. Micho objects to Mexican identity being projected by the media as a solid, immutable mass, as if the difference in skin color signified moral and/or intellectual inferiority. The sociologists and racial theorists Michael Omni and Howard Winant validate Micho's frustration in stating, "The whole gamut of racial stereotypes testifies to the way a racialized social structure shapes racial experience and socializes racial meanings. Analysis of prevailing stereotypes reveals that the always present, already active link between our view of the social structure—its demography, its laws, its customs, its threats—and our conception of what race means" (126). The ever present, ever vigilant racialized worldview that seems to activate stereotyping and racial bias at a moment's notice is what Micho has grown so tired of.

Micho's assessments of the media's influence tap into the ideas of theorists such as Omni, Winant, and Appadurai. Omni and Winant note, "film and television have been notorious . . . for disseminating images of racial minorities which establish for audiences what people from these groups look like, how they behave and who they are" (13). More significantly, Omni and Winant assert, "The power of the media lies not only in their

ability to reflect the dominant racial ideology, but in their capacity to shape that ideology in the first place" (13). Micho calls Mexicans "the unknown Americans" (hence, Henríquez's title for the novel) because he says no one even wants to get to know them. If people would only exert some effort to get to know him, or other Mexicans, Micho feels, they might see more similarities than differences, and "who would they hate then?" (237). Micho's implication is that in groups need an out group Other against which to counterbalance their own identity.

Arjun Appadurai's concept of the mediascape can be applied to Micho's views on tourism, the media, and stereotyping. Appadurai posits that our immediate viewing of and response to global issues through mass media, such as television, film, computers, etc., gives our imaginations agency in creating and interpreting what he calls subversive micronarratives (*Modernity at Large* 10). He states, "What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide, (especially in their television, film and cassette forms), large and complex repositories of images, narratives and 'ethnoscapes' to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of 'news' and politics are profoundly mixed" (*Theory, Culture and Society* 299). By way of example, in May of 2014, undocumented minor children from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala were crossing the South Texas U.S. Border in record numbers. The first week in July, a Fox News reporter was on the scene. Gripping his microphone, he looked dramatically into the camera said, "Meet public enemy number one." The camera panned to an eight- year-old boy, to whom the reporter spoke in Spanish. The boy said people had been told children would not be deported if they made it to the U.S. The screen flashed several five-second clips of angry protesters, most of whom were giving their

personal views on immigration rather than a factual account of the current situation. Corresponding headlines reading, "Endless Wave of Illegal Immigrants Floods Rio Grande Valley" and "Rep. Phil Gingrey Says Migrants May Be Bringing Ebola Virus Through U.S. Mexico Border" help create and control the "chimerical" images Appadurai refers to. Viewers come away with a sense of alarm, because the subtext is one of infiltration, invasion and disease.

Since most viewers see an amalgam of images and narratives on many viewing devices over both brief and extended periods of time, lines become blurred between what is real and what is imaginary. Words like "docudrama," "mocumentary," and "dramedy" that crop up in the lexicon illustrate the blending of media genres. Appadurai suggests that the lines between real and fictional landscapes have become so blurred, "that the farther away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds" (*Theory, Culture and Society* 299). As Micho points out, this type of socially constructed imagination does not favor the immigrant.

Henríquez illustrates that in addition to phenotypes of race and the accompanying prejudicial subtext, language, too, can be used to label and describe the Other, conveying fixed and overgeneralized attitudes that are not based on authentic experience, but rather on shared perceptions. Through her characters, Henríquez also portrays the frustrating and invalidating experiences of trying to communicate in a country without facility in the dominant language. The geographer Tim Unwin outlines a framework for his critique of Henri Lefebvre's ideas on the social production of space using five intersecting themes, one of which is language. Unwin states, "Language itself is a form of power. Restricted

access to knowledge of the codes and meanings of languages thus enables groups to maintain their elite status and control" (19). While Unwin is critiquing Lefebvre's ideas on language specifically, his statement can be applied to a broader spectrum.

Language is a critical contact point in interethnic relationships, and our ability to communicate can be a determiner of self-identity and self-worth. Henríquez demonstrates how the inability to communicate effectively can have a nullifying effect when Alma and Arturo Rivera try to buy groceries at a gas station shortly after arriving at their new apartment in Delaware. When they hand the cashier a twenty-dollar bill, the cashier holds out her hand for more. Neither Alma nor Arturo can figure out what she means. The line grows behind them; someone shouts something unintelligible at them. Arturo shows the cashier their empty basket to indicate they have nothing else they want to purchase. They are shocked to realize that the groceries cost more than twenty dollars. In a moment of keen awareness, Alma asks herself, "What must we look like to people here? . . . Speaking Spanish, wearing the same rumpled clothes we'd been in for days" (Henríquez 9). Through this experience, Alma is able to see herself and her family through the gaze of the dominant culture. She is cognizant not only of their Otherness, but also of their lack of visibility; that is, without language, they don't signify in the wider American culture.

Language also becomes a key issue when Alma loses track of her bus stop. She is supposed to meet her brain-injured daughter, Maribel, after school to walk her home. When the bus driver calls stop after unfamiliar stop Alma panics, and through her lack of proficiency in English, she sees herself as Other. In this scene, Henríquez verifies that an irrefutable catalyst in the creation of Otherness is language. Alma looks out of the bus

windows, wondering if the driver has taken a different route. She listens intently for him to call the name of her stop, Kirkwood, but it does not come. Alma's sense of displacement, situated in language, comes rushing to the foreground. In his study of diaspora, Clifford discusses the constant state of tension between rootedness and displacement, and one of the most salient intersections is language. He states that dwelling implies "real communicative discourse," without relying on translators (22). In Alma's case, without facility in the dominant language, it is not possible to feel a sense of belonging to a place, regardless of the amount of time spent living there.

When Alma decides to confront Garret Miller, the boy who has displayed sexually predatory behavior towards her daughter, she tries to figure out how to tell him to stop harassing Maribel. She looks in her dictionary and comes up with the words *leave* and *alone*, and practices them on the bus ride to his house—*leave alone, leave alone*. People like Alma who are not able to speak the dominant language proficiently, often find that their inability elicits an emotional and nativist response from first language speakers. In this case, when Alma finally summons the courage to confront Garret, he responds with "Go Home," adding a note of condescension, "Comprende?" (152). Alma understands that Garret is not telling her to go back to her apartment, but rather, to her country. In a common nativist response to English language learners, Garrett presupposes racial and linguistic dominance, and assumes the right to send people "back to where they came from."

Arturo experiences the alienating effects of his lack of proficiency in English when his wife, Alma, takes English lessons, not only with Profesora Shields, but also with her neighbor Celia. She learns how to say the phrase, "Are you hiring?" when

Arturo loses his job. Arturo is looking hard for a job, but admits that he feels silly using that phrase. He explains to Alma that when he says it, his prospective new employer answers him in English, and from there he has no direction, no path. He says, "They look at me like I'm stupid." When she reassures him that he is not stupid, he responds, "To them I am" (Henríquez 185). Arturo's response reflects a fundamental human ethos. According to the sociolinguist Bernard Spolsky, "Language is a central feature of human identity" (181). When that essential feature is blunted or diminished in some way, such as by the lack of facility in a dominant language, one's very identity is compromised and must be constantly renegotiated. Arturo knows that he is not stupid, but because of his poor English-speaking skills, he also knows that he appears to be. He understands that those in the dominant American culture see him as Other, foreign, and therefor deficient in some way.

Varying levels of skill in a language can have an unexpected effect within a family and can also contribute to recognition of the self as Other; for example, when his father wants to make a major purchase, a car, Mayor is asked to come along as a translator. Raphael's recognition that he needs his son to speak for him, even after living in the United States and speaking English for sixteen years or more, he lacks a full command of English, and recognizes that he may be viewed negatively because of his accent. Mayor argues that his dad speaks English every day on his job, but his father replies that he doesn't know the language of cars. Mayor states, " To him, everything had its own language—the language of breakfast, . . . of business, . . . of politics . . . In Spanish, he knew all the languages, but for as long as he'd been speaking English, he

believed he knew it only in certain realms" (Henríquez 161). Never being quite sure of oneself in a language addresses the fundamental insecurity diasporic people experience.

Raphael Toro's perception of his deficiencies in English highlight the undermining effect of what it means to be Other, not only within a culture, but also within a family. Raphael and his wife will self-identify as Panamanians or Panamanian-Americans for the rest of their lives, while their children will self-identify as Americans. In this sense, the role of parent and child is inverted, and the native-speaker child becomes the de facto head of the household linguistically. Lack of facility in a language, and lack of confidence in one's own ability to communicate effectively in that language, infantilizes the adult immigrant. The theorist Nancy Carnevale has observed an "inversion of authority within the immigrant household," and states, "immigrant parents relied heavily on their English-speaking children to navigate American society" (39). Carnevale's study was on Italian immigrants to the U.S. from 1890-1945, but she notes that linguistic infantalization was not unique to Italian immigrants.

Raphael is dependent on Mayor for expected situations, as when he asks Mayor to accompany him to the car dealership, for example, and unexpected ones, as when Mayor corrects Rafael's use of the word Oriental. Mayor tells his father that Oriental is used in reference to rugs, not people. Rafael is annoyed by the remark and asks, "Is this what they teach you at school? . . . Forget what to call people, what about history?" His son, perhaps for the first time, is correcting Rafael; and Rafael is forced to navigate new waters. Language, even in subtle ways is upheaving his traditional role as parent. The psychologist, J. Roland Fleck, comments that in immigrant families, a linguistic separation often evolves between parent and child, which is "symbolic of the more

profound emotional separation which is concurrently developing [between them]" (14). Within the Toro family, Rafael can identify himself as Other both in the wider culture and within the smaller culture of the individual family unit.

Enrique, Mayor's older brother, comes back from college for his Christmas visit, and the ease with which the brothers talk to each other is juxtaposed with the one-word answers Enrique gives his parents. This type of communication between parent and teen is not unusual. Teenagers often speak to each other in a more fluid way than they would with adults, but Enrique is looking at his parents and their home with new Americanized eyes. He tells his brother, "There's no way I could live here again . . . This place is so depressing . . . Every time I come back it seems shittier" (Henríquez 135). Enrique has adjusted his gaze to that of the wider culture and is not able to sentimentalize his parents' home in the same way he might have, had he not had the bicultural experience. Both he and Mayor will continue to expand their vision to fit the gaze of the wider culture, and to contract it when that gaze does not reflect how they see themselves. This is, to a large extent, the very nature of the Latino diasporic identity—a counterbalance of homogeneity and heterogeneity, within and without of the wider American culture, that encounters roadblocks and crossroads, eventually becoming an ever-changing amalgamation of all of the influences of both homeland and new land in real and imagined states.

Garrett Miller's character reflects the assumed superiority of White English speakers over nonwhite, non-English speakers, which is deeply rooted in the power relations within the social nexus. Michael Foucault identifies five points that establish a criterion for power relations, and, as Unwin has noted, language demarcation can be applied to nearly all of them. The system of differentiations that permits one to act upon

the actions of others, according to Foucault, can be determined by law, or by traditions of status and privilege (792). He names linguistic or cultural differences specifically in this definition. A dominant language group, for example, can maintain its status by discouraging or prohibiting the use of a subordinate language. Juan Gonzalez points out that despite the U.S. being a multiethnic state, indeed, despite Article 53 of the United Nations charter, which advocates "universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion," the U.S. routinely tolerates language discrimination against minority groups (231). According to a 2012 *Ohio State Law Journal* article, by Scott J. Bent, Spanish speaking students at some public schools are still being reprimanded for speaking Spanish, even in their school cafeterias or in the hallways while walking to class (345-346). While everyone presumably speaks English in the school that Garrett and Mayor attend, Garrett's couching of racial bias within his tone and phrasing is an attempt to maintain and enforce the existing linguistic power structure.

The character of Garrett Miller is the result of a confluence of streams, hundreds of years of historic, social, and cultural forces coming together. These include the more obvious influences of colonization, imperialism, capitalism, and the less obvious influence of science. Edward Said looks at the sciences and pseudo-sciences of the nineteenth century to evidence the construction of Otherness though language. He states that there were some valid scientific distinctions being made about people from the Orient based on language types, but researchers "were quickly able to acquire anthropological, psychological, biological, and cultural evidence in their support (231). He states that in studying the language of the Other, there was also "an attempt to define

a primary human potential" (232). Said cites Lionel Trilling who makes the point that these ideas, based on "rising nationalism and a spreading imperialism, supported by an incomplete and mal-assimilated science, was almost undisputed" (Said 232). The belief in human potential based on language and otherness, regardless of its invalidation in the global community today, has left a legacy of presumed ascendancy for first world speakers of English.

Garrett Miller is an archetype representing popular ideas about the progress of civilization, the dominance of the white race, the push for expansion, and the acquisition of colonial territories. These actions and ideas were mixed with science, politics, and culture conveying the message that a natural right existed for Europeans to dominate non-Europeans (Said 232). The nineteenth century collective consciousness of the superiority of the white race and of European ancestry provides sturdy bedrock for present day xenophobia, which includes language bias. The language that Garrett Miller speaks is loaded with embedded messages of authority and entitlement. Deep within the roots of language are the entangled threads of ethnic and social identity. By asserting his dominance, both physically and linguistically, Garrett Miller is maintaining a perceived social order that makes sense to him.

Historical context is important to an understanding of how language acts as an agent of Othering, particularly in the case of Maribel. American expansionism and imperialism rose in tandem with the rise of European nationalism and colonialist ambitions in the nineteenth century, according to the historian David Healy (151-2). In addition to these social forces, the pseudo-science of eugenics was becoming wildly popular. Advocates included Margaret Sanger, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson

and Andrew Carnegie, among other prominent figures of the time. James W. Trent, in his study, *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, notes that eugenics was based on the theory of inferior stock vs. good stock and "the concept of a new world order based on superindividuality" (138). He theorizes that the anti-immigrant sentiment in the early twentieth century was embedded in eugenicist ideology; that is, intelligence, integrity, and decency were considered fixed characteristics of race. Trent links the growing concern about the rise in immigration with the eugenics data stating that there was a propensity for feeblemindedness among immigrants. He says this notion confirmed what "superintendents, philanthropists and some politicians had been claiming for several decades: immigration was responsible for much of the increase in feeblemindedness" (167). Americans were developing a sense of self-protectionism based on xenophobic ideology, which is still present in today's American consciousness. People in society are not consciously aware of the historical and cultural forces that guide their thinking. Those who share the worldview of Garrett Miller would readily accept Maribel's diminished capacity as a part of her heritage.

People of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also believed that diseases such as tuberculosis were being brought into the U.S. and spread by immigrant families. The accented person became someone to guard against, to loathe. The American public widely read poems like "The White Man's Burden," by Rudyard Kipling, and "Unguarded Gates," by Thomas Bailey Aldrich. *The Atlantic Monthly* published Aldrich's poem in 1898, which characterized immigrants as "featureless figures" and barbarian "hordes," who spoke with "accents of menace" (Dwyer 108). The non-European, non-English-speaking foreigner, then, was someone to fear, his or her

very language a threat to decency, the American economy and to whiteness. While these fallacies have long been repudiated, they have undoubtedly left trace elements in the collective consciousness of the dominant culture.

Language is fastened to identity, and to translate one's language is akin to a translation of the self. One's voice, one's self-expression, and one's culture are in jeopardy of being misunderstood, misrepresented through a translated version of the self; however, living in a new culture necessitates the need for translation. The translator from Maribel's school district, Phyllis, tells Alma to think of her as her conduit to the school. She is being efficient and helpful, yet Alma realizes the limits to second-hand communication. She states, "So this is the doorway . . . between us and the rest of the country. I was grateful to have it, but . . . We couldn't walk through the door without someone to guide us to the other side" (Henríquez 27). Again, Alma is recognizing her Otherness in this new place. She is necessarily dependent on the people around her for the most basic of necessities, from buying food to taking the right bus, to her daughter's school registration. In a sense, language infantilizes Alma; that is, she is reduced to the status of a child, wholly reliant, wholly vulnerable, which is a shared experience among many immigrant groups.

When Alma comments on meeting their Paraguayan landlord, Fito, later in the same chapter, she says that she didn't know what to make of him but "There was a certain comfort that came with hearing someone speak Spanish, to understand and to be understood, to not have to wonder what I was missing" (Henriquez, 36). The comfort level she feels with Fito, juxtaposed with her complete inability to communicate with the clerk in the gas station, underscores the importance of language and its significance as an

aspect of Otherness. Alma compares English and Spanish after an English class with Profesora Shields. She states, "English is such a dense, tight language . . . Not open with vowels the way Spanish was. Our throats open, our mouths open, our hearts open. In English the sounds were closed" (Henríquez, 60). Alma is transferring her interpretation of difference in language to difference in culture, that is; if one parallels her former thought to her latter, and extend her thoughts, one would have to end her last sentence with "hearts were closed." She feels alienated by the culture, which is manifested in her alienation by the English language.

Spanish, for Alma, is the language of emotion, the language of memory and nostalgia. In *Hunger of Memory*, Richard Rodriguez calls Spanish the language of home, "the language of joyful return" (14). He says that even though he heard Spanish on the radio and in the Mexican Catholic Church, he could not think of it as public language, but rather, as a private language shared between friends and family. The comfort Alma feels in speaking to Fito in Spanish can be understood through Rodriguez's statement, "Spanish speakers, rather, seemed related to me, for I sensed that we shared—through our language—the experience of feeling apart from los gringos" (14). The connection that Alma feels when she is speaking Spanish to those who understand her fully is one of joy, gratitude and relief; however, as James Clifford points out, "Peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be "cured" by merging into a new national community. This is especially true when they are the victims of ongoing structural prejudice (250, 251). Speaking in her own language gives Alma a sense of wellbeing, if only temporarily.

Despite speaking the same language, all of the families in the apartment house are from very different places. Henríquez's novel excavates the mythology of a Latino monolithic culture. When the novel's bully, Garrett Miller asks Mayor where he is going in one scene, Mayor answers "Home." Garrett asks, "Back to Mexico?" (Henríquez 69). When Mayor answers that he is not from Mexico, Garrett comments that his father has told him, "all you people are from Mexico." Mayor is experiencing what many Latinos encounter in the U.S., which is the perception that all Latinos are from the same place, which in turn, creates a sense of placelessness.

A 2013 study by Logan and Turner from Brown University shows that many non-Mexican groups are growing at a much faster rate than Mexicans, and now number in the millions. These groups are accelerating at different rates economically and socially. Puerto Ricans and Cubans, for example, earn more than Mexicans, and Argentinians and Venezuelans earn significantly more. South Americans tend to have a higher level of education. Traditional Hispanic groups identified by the 1990 census were Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, but, according to the census in 2000, the fastest growth segments in the Hispanic category are New Latinos, who come from Central America (particularly Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador); South America (particularly Colombia); and the Dominican Republic (Logan and Turner 1). The predilection for non-Hispanic groups to identify all Hispanics as Mexican belies the non-monolithic nature of Hispanics in the U.S., and effectively renders large groups of people from Central America "invisible." This invisibility, combined with a sense of placelessness, as Mayor pointedly notes, undermines the identity of Panamanians, and other non-Mexican

Hispanic groups, by categorizing them as one monolithic Other. This is part of the everyday lived tension of diasporic groups to which Clifford refers (255).

Mayor makes an ironic point when he talks about his parents plan to return to Panama. Like many people of diaspora, Alma and Rafael, are hoping that their exile is only temporary. People from Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Guatemala, all, at different points in time, have felt that the political upheavals in their countries would soon be over, and that they would be able to return to their homelands. In fact, a major tenet of William Safran's conditions of diasporic people is that " . . . they see their ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right" (Clifford 247). Many people of exile share Alma and Rafael's dream of return. To some extent, this may undermine their ability to assimilate into their new culture. Clifford points out that this resistance can manifest in a desire to reclaim the nation that has been lost or a simultaneous feeling of "separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place" (255). The inability to move forward with a new life, combined with the impossibility of returning to their old life, leaves families like the Toros in a state of inertia. They are not separatists, yet they feel nationalistic ties to their country of origin and solidarity with their countrymen.

The Toro family assumed conditions would improve in Panama, however, as Mayor points out, " . . . the country was so ravaged that their hearts never stopped breaking" (Henríquez 78). The irony here is that Mayor follows this statement by commenting, "A while after I was old enough to understand the story, I pointed out how backwards it was to have fled to the nation that had driven them out of theirs . . ." (78). The U.S., the very country that is holding his family in the margins of society, has created

an atmosphere in which they are afraid to drive over 25 miles per hour for fear of being arrested, frustrated at not being understood, and angered at being told to go home. The United States, however, is also a country that has contributed, to some degree, to conditions that have made Panama unlivable. Despite the fact that the Toro family had become U.S. citizens, they still feel the insecurity of Otherness in Villanueva's poem found in the introduction to this paper.

Henríquez's novel addresses the feeling of disembodied intimacy that people of diaspora experience; that is, they acknowledge an emotional closeness to family and friends in their country of origin without physical or visual contact. The telephone is one of the most symbolic invocations of Otherness, not only in Henríquez's novel, but also in many pieces of Hispanic fiction and film. In the *Book of Unknown Americans*, Henríquez renders a scene between Alma, in Delaware, and her mother, in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, who are only supposed to call each other in emergencies because of the prohibitive cost. Alma calls one day, not because of any crisis, but because she misses them so much. After hearing the concern in her parents' voices, and reassuring them that everything was okay, Alma says, "I imagined the two of them crowded around the receiver in their small kitchen, the kitchen I had grown up eating in, with its half- moon window over the sink and the clay rooster my mother kept on the counter next to her bean pot and a jelly jar filled with flowers" (Henríquez 52). Alma hears gossip from her hometown—a friend had finally had her baby, a local farmer had lost two pigs—and she is momentarily transported back to Pátzcuaro. She is, for those few minutes, living in the imagined space of her homeland, breathing it, smelling it. And yet, she says that it makes her feel more disconnected than ever.

Alma's phone call is a figurative "return" to Mexico, not a physical one. She is creating a space of warmth and comfort outside her present reality. Alma is not seeking closure with Mexico, but continuity—the sustained presence of her home country in her adoptive one. The clay rooster, the bean pot, and the jelly jar all become objects of endearment, pieces of a homeland. In the introduction to *Identity, Diaspora and Return in American Literature*, the editor, Maria Antònia Oliver-Rotger quotes Vera Mihailovich-Dickman when stating that for ethnic American writers, the physical return is "irrelevant" and that "American diasporic narratives of return emphasize the ethnic American subject's opening up of imaginary geographies, as well as resistance to the American nation-state and its corresponding imaginary constructs (14). Alma's imaginary geography is simultaneously real and abstract, infused with memory, nostalgia, language, family, time, and culture.

The telephone is a vehicle of passage, a transportive thirdspace that combines two countries, two realities, and yet they remain apart. John Tomlinson refers to this experience as disembodied intimacy. He explains that the telephone can help families create a sense of intimacy, especially with newer advances in technology every day such as Skype, and that phones "connect us with others in contexts which are . . . congruent with our local life worlds" (170). For Alma, hearing her mother's voice in such close proximity has the effect of simultaneously creating intimacy while emphasizing the distance between them. The act of hanging up is an amputation of sorts, a severing of one world from the other, which leaves Alma detached from her sense of place and her sense of self-identity.

Henríquez addresses intimacy on several levels, depicting the loss of familial closeness between parents and children of diaspora as not only a generational, but also a cultural, divide. Mayor describes Christmas that year as being the best and worst they had ever had. He and his parents had met Enrique, who was spending only a few days of his college winter recess with them, at the train station, and they rode home together on the bus. The bus driver, seeing that they were Latino, put on a Spanish station that was playing "Feliz Navidad." Although they understand the bus driver is trying to comfort them and they appreciated the gesture, Mayor's father comments, "Every year it's the same thing. If it's Spanish, it must be a piece of home. Well, I never heard this song until I came to the United States" (136). Rafael and Celia reinforce their identity as Panamanians by telling each other that they don't even eat tacos in Panama— they eat chicken and rice. This small exchange between husband and wife serves to remind them of who they truly are. In his essay "Difference, Identity and Politics," Egan Gál points out that a person "cannot be devoid of local identity, traditions, views and convictions" (99). He posits that perhaps a person cannot fully exist without connection to a wider group known as "we" (99). This poses the quandary of which "we" to belong to. Rafael and Celia do not want to disappear into the social construction of Latinos as a monolith. They don't always get along, but they need each other for this – to remind one another that they exist—and at the very core of their existence is Panama.

For Mayor and Enrique, along with many first generation children of diaspora, the "we" may vary, since their conceptions of homeland and identity are shifting. According to the Pew Research Center, the term "Hispanic" was added to U.S. Census forms in 1970, and the term "Latino" in 2000 (Cohn). Both terms are an attempt by the U.S.

government to classify large groups of people from Spanish-speaking countries that do not necessarily share common roots. In a related article, the Pew Research Center estimates that 51 percent of adult Hispanics identify themselves by their family's country of origin, whereas only 24 percent prefer the pan-ethnic "Latino" or Hispanic" label (Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, and Velasco). Sixty-nine percent of respondents to a Pew survey said they do not share a common culture with other Latinos, but the overwhelming majority expressed a strong connection to the Spanish language.

Reinforcing a sense of self-identity through connecting to a larger, Spanish-speaking "we" is an important aspect of diasporic literature. Henríquez illustrates this connection during an impromptu Christmas party in the Toro's apartment. Since the building was out of heat, Mayor suggest to his parents that they should invite their neighbors, the Riveras, over for a little Christmas cheer. He is secretly hoping to spend time with Maribel, because he had gotten her a Christmas present. His mother not only invites the Riveras, who are from Mexico, but also the six other tenant families in the building. The families drink and laugh together, downing coffee to stay warm. When the coffee runs out, Celia makes hot chocolate, and Alma asks for cinnamon so she can make the beverage Mexican style. After finding some cinnamon Celia teases, "Are you happy now? . . . It always has to be the Mexican way. México, México. As if the rest of us don't exist" (140). When Micho shouts, "Viva México," the others become excited in a moment of self-identity, each one shouting the name of his country: Panamá! Nicaragua! Puerto Rico! Venezuela! Paraguay! A wife, husband, or family member shouts back an enthusiastic "*Presente*!" (141). This is an act of resistance, a powerful reaffirmation and reassertion of the individual self, each person's claiming his or her right to identify as a

Panamanian, a Venezuelan, or a Puerto Rican, without submerging their identity into a Latino homogeneity. Immediately after the *presente* scene, for the second time in this chapter, "Feliz Navidad" comes on the radio. Rather than objecting to the ubiquitous blanket of Latinoness that seemingly obliterated their connections to individual homelands, members from different families start dancing with each other and singing along. Once each person reestablishes his or her connection to their country in Spanish, they are freed of social preconceptions and constraints and are free to dance and mingle with people from different places and distinct backgrounds as a cohesive group.

Identity is not a fixed entity, unchanging from birth to death. Latino identity is forged in empire, disruption, and transplantation. As populations shift, identities become more malleable. Mayor's family, for example, has gone from being Panamanian to Central American to Latino, and eventually Panamanian-American. Countries, too, have fluid identities, prone to divisions and revisions over centuries by natural and human forces. Ilan Stavans, in the introduction to *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature,* refers to W.E.B. Du Bois's double consciousness when he states, "Latinos' double consciousness and the plurality of views exhibited in their worldview is the result of the historical journey they have traveled individually and collectively . . . ." (Ixviii). Despite all these fluctuating levels of consciousness, identity, and self, there still must be something solid to stand on. People need something to moor themselves to and say, yes! This is who I am. That thing, although not an inherent human identifier, is nation. In *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha quotes Ernest Renan who states, "a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" (19). In this sense, the term "nation" is both subjective and emotional. Even people who are raised with the same borders do not share the same

lived world experience. It is that soul, that spiritual essence of each of the representative countries in the Toro's apartment that Christmas Eve, which gives every person there a sense of security, comfort, belonging, and identity.

A critical aspect of the Latino diasporic identity is that of conspicuous invisibility; that is, the feeling of being present, but not being seen by those sharing the same space. Alma Rivera describes a common manifestation of Otherness when Arturo wants to celebrate their wedding anniversary. In Panama, they would have celebrated by going out to a restaurant for dinner, but since they have no money in the U.S., Arturo decides that their little family will go out to a pizzeria and order water so they can toast each other. Alma describes how she, Maribel, and Arturo sip ice water from red plastic cups, while American families around them drink beer and eat pizza. She is self-consciously aware that they are "taking up space," and wonders if people have noticed them. She says, "But when I glanced at the people around us, no one was even looking in our direction, and I felt the way I often felt in this country—simultaneously conspicuous and invisible, like an oddity whom everyone noticed, but chose to ignore" (Henríquez187). To be rendered invisible is to be of no consequence, to have no value. Many immigrant workers, documented and undocumented alike experience this same phenomenon—a sense that they are among people, yet no one seems to see them or express any interest in what they may be doing or thinking. The effect of this realization of the self not only as Other, but also as insignificant or impotent, is demoralizing and erosive to the core identity of the individual.

Cristina Henríquez's novel, *The Book of Unknown Americans*, reflects the myriad influences and shifting borders between Panama and the U.S. by using eleven different

narrators from eight different countries. Many of the characters, including members of the Toro and Rivera families, recognize themselves as Other in the world around them, which is evidenced through language difficulties as well as through their personal experiences. Maribel Rivera is exoticized for her striking beauty, and also for her reserved mystery. Micho Alvarez addresses socio-cultural hazards of tourism by voicing frustration with people who feel they have experienced a country because they have vacationed in an all-inclusive compound. Language is rendered as a two-sided coin, at times alienating and at times grounding the speakers. A sense of alterity emerges from these narratives, along with permeability between membranes of language, real and imagined geographies, and resistance to both the mythology of the monolithic Latino culture and the wider culture's American gaze. Henríquez's novel speaks to the malleability of identity through various models including conspicuous invisibility and the concept of one's homeland as part and parcel of one's spiritual identity.

CHAPTER FOUR
CUBA: "IN CUBA I WAS A GERMAN SHEPHERD" BY ANA MENENDEZ

The literature of the Cuban diaspora reflects the duality of Cuban life in a thirdspace—the space between the writers' experience in the U.S. and the nostalgia for a Cuba that only existed in the romantic imagination of their grandparents. On one hand, as Isabel Alvarez Borland states, diasporic Cuban writers attempt to "address and redress the injustices of official Cuban history;" but, on the other, they also focus on forging a relationship between the past and the present, and on trying to negotiate an identity that is being shaped in a new country (Alvarez Borland 49). Ana Menéndez's collection of stories, In *Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, takes place in a contact zone, defined by Mary Louise Pratt as a social space "where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths, as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (33-40). Menéndez's stories contain many examples of characters navigating identities that have been constructed through geopolitical rupture, perhaps none more poignant than the tale for which the book was named.

Ana Menéndez's story, "In Cuba I was a German Shepherd," is the centerpiece of her collection. The four characters are displaced, retired men, two from Cuba, Máximo and Raul; and two from Dominican Republic, Antonio and Carlos. The story presents a bird's eye view into life in the Latino diaspora in Miami and provides insight into the concept of self as Other from a Cuban perspective. Menéndez's portrayal of otherness

fits the criterion Eliana Rivero outlines in her essay on Cuban American women writers "getting it right." Rivero states,

> Cuban American novelists, poets, essayists, and playwrights write/dream within a circumstantial, inherited . . . context of exilic and migratory memories, nostalgic family remembrances, re-creation of transnational and deterritorialized imaginaries, and the everyday experience of "living as Other" in a society that—albeit national protestations the contrary—highly values ethnic homogeneity even when it outwardly celebrates diversity (109).

None of the men in Menéndez's story seem to want to submerge themselves into a homogeneous social entity, but Máximo, more so than the other three characters, sees the irony of their situation and feels the burden of otherness pressing in on him.

Máximo is a diminutive man, a former professor and current joke-teller from Cuba. Even his name is funny, as it is in direct opposition to his stature. The men get together frequently to play dominoes in the park readers later come to know as Domino Park in Little Havana, Miami. Initially, the park seems like an oasis, a safe, relaxing space for the men to unwind, tell jokes (or listen to them) and play dominoes, while traffic noises rise up from the hot asphalt surrounding the green space. As the story progresses, however, the "fenced rectangle of space" seems more like another border that separates two worlds than a haven. The setting of Domino Park is what sociologist John Urry would identify as an "anti-structure," as it is both out of time and place (Urry 11). The men and the atmosphere stand as mimetic symbols for another time, another place.

The park itself serves as a metaphor for the Cuban community in Miami, set apart from the torrent of "native" Floridians and tourists that ebbs and flows around them.

Raúl and Máximo had lived on the same street in Havana, but were not friends; rather, they were "friendly in the way of people who come from the same place and think they already know the important things about one another" (Menéndez 5). The sociology of place certainly comes into play here; Domino Park and its surrounding environs exemplify one place attempting to clone another. The borders between Cuba and Miami bleed into each other, mingling historic imagination, languages, social networks and concrete structures. In *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward Soja address the double construction of space, noting that places aren't just built, they are also "interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined." He refers to what Lefebvre would call "*l'espace vécu,* actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices" (Soja 18). In communities such as the El Vedado section of Havana, people come to know each other through a well-established lifestyle. They are likely to have seen each other on the streets, they or their children may have gone to the same schools and, without intimate knowledge of each other, they may share a remarkably similar lived world experience.

Similarity of space in the cultural framework that Máximo and Raúl share can be attributed to the historical events of a common past. Both men and their families have been uprooted from their homeland by the violence of Castro's rise to power in Cuba. They may tend to feel more of a sense of knowing each other because of their shared histories; that is not to say that they think and feel alike. An intimate shared knowledge of a cataclysmic event, however, makes them more prone to "think they know the

important things," about one another's lives, as the narrator states. Over time, they have become part of a Cuban enclave in Miami and their central identities are now tied to their experience with rupture and migration. When Máximo leaves Cuba, he leaves his house, his piano, and his pension from the university, all with the idea that he would return within two years, three at the most. Although the desire for return to the home country is a common trait among diasporic groups, it is particularly true for Cubans who left just after Castro seized power. The west and much of the world felt Castro's time in power would be very fleeting.

Máximo's first job in the U.S. was driving a taxi, but "the streets were a web of foreign names and winding curves that could one day lead to glitter and another to the hollow end of a pistol" (Menéndez 6). The act of driving a taxi mimics the immigrant experience in that everything is strange and unfamiliar. There is always the hope of great reward, but the journey is also fraught with danger. Máximo has gone from teaching at a university and a very comfortable lifestyle to trying to eke out a living by traversing unfamiliar territory for tips. He and his wife end up selling sandwiches they make themselves to Cuban sugar cane workers. For Máximo, Rosa, and thousands of diasporic people, ego adjustment is a necessary tool for survival.

Raúl's experience has been similar to Máximo's since in Cuba he was a government accountant. When he gets to the U.S., he asks Máximo and Rosa for a job waiting tables in the restaurant they have opened over time. To exist as the Other in Miami, specifically the Cuban Other, newcomers will have to re-imagine themselves at a very fundamental level. In the restaurant they have opened "a generation of former professors serves black beans and rice to the nostalgic," indicating that many former

white-collar workers, accustomed to being served are now the servers of blue-collar workers (Menéndez 7). Rupture, then, is not only the seismic upheaval of deterritorialization, but also the profound shift in the way individuals see themselves in the gaze of the wider culture. They must reimagine themselves and navigate their lives in a way that validates and reinforces their identity, while living in an atmosphere that is often invalidating and destabilizing.

After closing time, Máximo, Rosa, and Raúl sat with their staff of former lawyers and bankers and reminisce about Cuba. They were people of means in their country, and did not migrate for economic reasons, but rather, political causes. Their mentality is one of exile and as such, their stories always started the same way, "In Cuba, . . . life was good and pure" (Menéndez 7). Despite the nostalgic overtones, the stories did not end well; they always seemed to take a bad turn, giving Máximo fitful nights. Stories of exile are necessarily washed with darkness, and yet the memories Máximo and the others have of Cuba are a fundamental part of who they are. In order to preserve their identity, they must preserve Cuba. They are the keepers of the collective Cuban memory, which is also a construction.

The memories of Máximo and his friends are not necessarily the reality that existed in Cuba, but rather a nostalgic view of the past that their children will inherit from them. They are participants in keeping themselves separate from the mainstream Miami culture, thereby contributing to the Othering they encounter. Gustavo Pérez Firmat refers to Cubans like Máximo as chronic exiles. He notes, " . . . the chronic exile thinks of Cuba as his *patria*, a personal possession, an imaginary homeland, a country he cannot leave or lose" (191). Home becomes simultaneously a tangible space, maddeningly

close in proximity, and an abstract or conceptual space. The creation of this thirdspace enables Máximo to secure his memory of Cuba, at least for a while, and stave off the America that surrounds him, thereby effectively refuting his displacement. He is Other, but the wider culture is kept at bay by the enclave in Little Havana, and by the fence surrounding the park where he and his friends play dominoes.

Gustavo Pérez Firmat explains that when a group leaves its country for another, especially involuntarily, they go through several stages of adaptation, the first being the substitutive stage (6). He suggests that even the name "Little Havana" is a reference not only to geographic size, but also to " . . . its diminished status as a deficient or incomplete copy of the original" (6). Pérez Firmat posits that the reason Little Havana seems to exist in a time warp is because people are intentionally clinging to their vision of homeland, collaboratively creating a facsimile of the real thing. In this substitutive stage, people can *almost* convince themselves that they've never left their country of origin. As heroic an effort as this may be, Pérez Firmat asserts, it is doomed to fail. Eventually, something will signal that they are not in Cuba anymore. For Máximo, the signal is the crowds of people gathered along the fence, the clicking of the cameras, and the megaphoned voice of the tour guide. These elements make him conscious of the fact that his safe haven inside Domino Park is only a diorama.

Because Máximo and Raúl are part of Cuba's "historic exile," they share an even deeper connection. The term "historic exile," refers to the exodus from Cuba after 1959, when Castro came into power. The first large-scale migration included approximately 250,000 people. From 1965 through 1973, another 400,000 Cubans emigrated. The Mariel boatlift in 1980 was the third wave of Cuban emigration, and included about

120,000 people (Borland 4-5). The connection between Maxímo and Raúl, and their relation to others with similar circumstances, helps to create an emotional, as well as a socio-cultural support system, along with a strong sense of community. Cristina Peri Rossi describes the depth of this type of relationship in her novel, *La nave de los locos*, which deems all exiles are related: "*somos exiliados, y ese es un vincula muy profundo, como un cordon umbilical*" [we're exiles and this creates a closer tie than any umbilical cord] (107).

Máximo recognizes himself as Other within the wider Miami culture, yet his friends do not see themselves in the same light. Raúl initiates going to Domino Park, but Máximo objects, specifically because he knows it's a tourist destination and does not want to be gawked at. Raúl plays the role, however, dressing in a traditional guayaberra and saying, "Let them take pictures . . . What the hell. Make us immortal" (Menéndez 9). Raúl also recognizes himself as Other, but he sees himself as desirable and exotic, the one everyone wants in their photo albums. Máximo's thought is that perhaps immortality is the gods' punishment. He understands that a photograph would not only show the superficial image of him and his friends playing dominos, but it would also reflect the rupture, displacement, and sense of loss they have experienced. The thought of some stranger showing his picture as an amusing trifle is intolerable to Máximo. The problem with the photographic tourist gaze according to John Urry is that nature, various environments, and human beings are "transformed into objects that are passed from person to person" (Urry 129). In seeing himself at the receiving end of the lens, Máximo recognizes the trivialization not only of himself, but also of Cuba.

The entangled history of the U.S. and Cuba has contributed to the Cuban diaspora in the U.S, the Cuban enclave in Miami, and the men who gather in Domino Park to play dominos. One of the jokes Máximo shares with the other men is about a little dog named Juanito who flirts with a white poodle. Máximo's connection to the joke, and to Juanito, characterizes the alienation he feels within this enclave, and his acute awareness of his own Otherness. The white poodle reminds Juanito that he is out of line, out of place, when she says "This is America, kindly speak English." She is enforcing the social boundaries of the white, English-speaking dominant group over the Latino Other. Máximo sees himself in Juanito, and is agonizingly aware of his displacement. In reference to Máximo's recognition of himself as Other, Hispanic literary theorist Dr. Ortúzar-Young notes that Máximo is forced to "confront a new knowledge, something he never would [have] faced in his native country – 'race' and 'ethnicity'—the birthmarks of the foreigner" (Ortúzar-Young 153). Ortúzar-Young further suggests that Máximo "is being seen as a mutt, inferior to the elegant, well-kept, and above all, white poodle" (153). The poodle's differentiation between speaking the English language and speaking the Spanish language suggests an implied value judgment; one is viewed as superior to the other by the dominant culture. Máximo sees himself through a linguistic lens and is able to situate himself in the dominant social structure as Other.

In Máximo's joke lies the raw truth. Juanito offers to marry the white poodle, have puppies with her and take her to live in a castle, to which she replies, " Do you have any idea who you're talking to? I am a refined breed of considerable class and you are nothing but a short, insignificant mutt" (28). The punch line of the joke, which has now taken on a much deeper meaning, is when Juanito responds, "Pardon me, your

highness, . . . Here in America, I may be a short, insignificant mutt, but in Cuba I was a German Shepherd" (28). At this point, Máximo has to turn away so that the other men do not see his tears. This is the moment of truth—Máximo recognizes himself as Other, which is both painful and humiliating for him. He sees himself as powerless in the substitutive culture of Miami. There is nothing he can do about his current situation, nor can he rewrite the past and return to a Cuba that, for him, no longer exists despite his best efforts to preserve it.

The notion of exoticization enters Menéndez's story through busloads of sightseers who come to watch and photograph the men. Máximo and the men at Domino Park are considered exotic because they are part of an exploitative fantasy imagined by tourists and proliferated by the tourism industry in Miami. Vacationers pay to see an attraction for which companies have little to no expenditure. According to Knellwolf and McCalman, "The exotic is a generic ploy. It frequently undercuts one's sense of realism and involves a dehumanizing process" (4). On some level, Máximo recognizes that he is being objectified in this way. His response is, "Tell them to go away . . . Tell them, no pictures" (Menéndez 29). The anthropologist Edward M. Bruner describes tourism of borderzone communities as "a type of voyeurism, and overabundance of seeing, a cornucopia of visualization – almost a pathology, a scopophilia" (Lavie & Swedenburg 160). In his book, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, Bruner addresses various definitions of the term borderzone. He cites Mary Louise Pratt's definition as "the space of colonial encounters," but objects to her assertion that relationships in this space usually feature "coercion, racial inequality and intractable conflict." Bruner prefers Homi Bhabha's understanding of what he calls a thirdspace, which is not interpreted as a

"reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition" (Bruner 18). He further explains that as the other becomes exoticized and romanticized, it also becomes domesticated, "performing a Western version of their culture, essentially as entertainers" (161). Máximo's friends accommodate the global consumption of their culture by performing the antics they believe are expected of them.

The tourists at Domino Park are not actually seeing Cuban culture, but rather, a re-creation of the exotic Cuban culture they have come to imagine. They are both visiting and helping to fabricate a modern day version of the human zoo, a nineteenth century European phenomenon wherein human beings, largely those from exotic locales such as Africa, China or South America, were put on display "for the sole purpose of showing their peculiar morphological or ethnic condition" (Sánchez-Gómez). Máximo and his friends are not displayed in the same way as in the nineteenth century, of course, but the tour guide's presentation of the men to the tourists is exploitative and depends on the concept of exoticism.

Domino Park would loosely qualify as what Bruner refers to as a touristic borderzone. Bruner defines this as " . . . a distinct meeting place between the tourists who come forth from their hotels and the local performers, the "natives" who leave their homes to engage the tourists in structured ways in predetermined localities for defined periods of time" (17). The tourists and the dominoes players are both participants in a cooperative fabrication, because the people being viewed are shaping their actions and behaviors based on what they assume tourists expect to see. As Staszak points out in his article on otherness,

> The otherness of the exotic is not the brute and brutal otherness of the first encounter; it is the bland otherness, staged and transformed into merchandise, of the colonial world offered up as spectacle, as in orientalist paintings, human zoos . . . and exotic dance. Exoticism is less the pleasure of confronting otherness than the pleasure of having the satisfaction of experiencing the sight of a reassuring version of this confrontation, true to our fantasies, that comforts us in our identity and superiority (6).

Those with cameras are fixing an image of tranquility, peacefulness and domestication that reassures them of their own ascendancy. The tourists in Menéndez's story, though, are one step removed from the ones Bruner and Staszak refer to, in that they most likely have not left their home country, and possibly may not even have left their home state, in order to experience what they consider exotic.

There are pockets of diasporic Cubans, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Guatemalans, etc. all over the country, yet as Bruner pointedly notes, these Others are not considered romantic, beautiful, or exotic (Lavie and Swedenburg 161). The dominant, white mainstream culture often sees difference within their midst as a hazard to the order, the economy, and the workforce. Unless brown-skinned Latinos are performing as caricatures of the idealized conventional notion of the Latino, they become the racialized, unwanted Other. Máximo, Raúl, Antonio, and Carlos are, up until the point when Maxímo lashes out, behaving as the tourists expect. With the exception of Máximo, they are acting and dressing the part thereby subverting their alterity with an imaginary of the Cuban national based on dominant cultural stereotypes.

Cultural historians Knellwolf and McCalman theorize that the exotic has always

depended on exaggeration and decontextualization. They explain that the exotic, whether a person or an object, is authentic in and of itself. Taking it out of its natural environment or its proper context leads to an appropriation by the narratives of those who view them (or own them, as the case may be) and a taming of their "potentially frightening otherness" (Knellwolf and McCalman 3). Máximo and the others have been removed from their respective homelands. Their identity is on display through their actions of playing dominoes in the park, but their identities are in flux, as they become enmeshed with spectators from the dominant culture. They are reduced to a static, inauthentic, homogenized version of themselves, based on what tourists expect to see. Essentially, Máximo and the others are rendered exotic and kitschy by strangers with cameras.

When the tour guide refers to Domino Park and the men playing dominos as "a slice of the past" he is following the American narrative of Cuba in much the same way a ring master at a circus would tell people to "Step right up" for a closer view. Edward Said posits that dominant culture narratives, usually written in a book or text, often take on a greater authority than the actuality being described (Said 93). He says, " . . . such texts can create not only knowledge, but the also very reality they appear to describe" (94). The tourists, seeking the exotic Other, are actually only viewing a romanticized version of Cuba based on a socially constructed ideal. Máximo senses this at a primal level; seeing himself as the exoticized Other is starting to strip away the veneer. Máximo can begin to recognized himself in eyes of the wider culture as the alternate type of Other, the trivialized and commodified Other, which is a devastating blow to his identity and his self worth.

Menéndez's story has an element of reversal at play, in that the parameters of homeland and the exotic are breeched, one bleeding into the other. Pérez Firmat explains that for the chronic or long-term exile, "the homeland becomes foreign, a destination as strange and exotic as the Orient that Christopher Columbus believed he had reached" (Pérez Firmat 177). Máximo's past is comingling with his present. Miami is becoming mundane, while Cuba is becoming exotic due to many cultural influences, including the strong element of nostalgia. Máximo's interaction with the wider Miami culture is limited, his world is becoming smaller, more insular, while Cuba looms larger and larger in his imagination.

Pérez Firmat explains that there are two kinds of nostalgia—restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia is a longing for the Cuba that existed before Castro. Pérez Firmat quotes Boym's definition of reflective nostalgia as "ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary" (180). Máximo's nostalgia is primarily restorative, as he lingers for hours on each meal, "remembering the story of each dish" (Menéndez 14). Moreover, nearly all of Máximo's jokes are focused on a time when Castro is no longer in control of the island. Ironically, Máximo exoticizes Cuba in much the same way that tourists exoticize him. Both visions are highly romanticized; both resist the realities behind them.

The busloads of Christmas tourists arrive to watch the men play dominos in the park, adding a surreal atmosphere to the story. They come in little white buses with "happy blue letters" spelling out "Welcome to Little Havana," and stare, point, and snap pictures while the men play. Their actions are alienating to Máximo, whose dignity, self worth, and identity are tied to his Cubanness. Tourists are looking for an authentic Cuban experience, associating the men in the park with Cuba's beauty, its crumbling colonial

buildings, its history of intrigue and escape. Máximo and the others are part of the landscape taken in by the tourists' voyeuristic gaze in a fetishized zone. Americanist Ardis Cameron posits, "Topographies of strangeness, overstuffed with desire and dread, othered places like these have long defined a particular kind of rupture in American narratives of modernity and progress" (Cameron 412). Cameron is referring to America's pockets of unassimilated regions, specifically northern New England and Appalachia; however, Domino Park in Miami would certainly qualify as a space of concentrated cultural intensity that the mainstream culture would find "photo worthy." Both the men and the place become a marketable commodity in the cultural imaginary, representing for the tourists, as Cameron would phrase it, a welcomed relief from "over-civilization."

The worst part for Máximo, is that Raúl, Antonio, and Carlos all dress the part and affect the actions of what they think Americans expect of Cuban men. They become uncharacteristically boisterous, and use cigars as props to "sell" themselves as authentic Cubans, yet only two of the four are from Cuba. Máximo is becoming agitated, but he is not as angry as he is sad. He senses something important is dying and he is helpless to stop it. The idea of being able to "tour" Cuban culture is a type of Othering that is linked to objectification and trivialization of that culture. Cuban culture is not something one can put in one's pocket or display on a coffee table. In the case of tourism, the men in Domino Park are being Othered, yet most of them, with the exception of Máximo, willingly participating in the process. Ironically, they are becoming more Other than the Other they would have been had they not used their clothing as costumes and used their cigars as props. The lines between what is real and what is imagined become blurred,

creating a thirdspace that is neither *aqui* nor *alla*. The tourist industry leads people to think that they do not have to leave the United States to "experience" Cuba.

Bruner makes an interesting point about the reasons why tourists travel. They may want to pursue action and adventure, educate themselves, or collect exotic images of the Other. He notes that tourists bring back "a disembodied, decontextualized sanitized, hypothetical Other, one they can possess and control through stories they tell" (Lavie & Swedenburg 161). This narrative, telling the story of the Other with the tourist positioned at the center of the action, is a way to "fix meaning, encapsulate, and control the Other, stop motion and time, and exert power," according to Bruner (161). The tourists' power over the Other simulates, to a much lesser extent, the power of the conqueror over the conquered, or the empire over the colonized.

In order to maintain his dignity, Máximo does not want things to change. He considers himself a mainstream individual, not a marginalized one. He is Cuban, not a hyphenated Cuban-American. To recognized himself as anything but completely Cuban, with all the meaning he infuses into that identity, would be to see himself the way the wider culture sees him—at best, as Other, at worst, as a foolish old man. Máximo considers dominoes a quiet game. When he sees his friends playing their animated parts as if they were on stage, his thoughts regarding what Cuba is or was become clouded. He is what Pérez Firmat calls the chronic exile. Pérez Firmat explains that " . . . the tourist seeks the unknown, the unfamiliar, the chronic exile worships sameness: Cuba, Cuba, Cuba. The tourist comes and goes, while the chronic exile having left once, has decided not to leave again" (193). The thin veneer of Máximo's Cubanness is cracking

under the pressure of the tourists' gaze. Every click of the cameras is forcing him to accept that Little Havana is not Havana, but merely a poor substitute for the real thing.

As one of the young, sandy-haired tour guides presents his sterilized, pop culture version of what it means to be Cuban, Máximo reaches his breaking point. The guide explains that the men in the park are playing dominos as a way of keeping traditional Cuban culture alive. He tells the tourists, "Folks, here you are seeing a slice of the past. A simpler time of good friendships and unhurried days" (25). Culture is a complex, multi-leveled concern, however. To sell Cuban culture as a commodity to tourists, is to drastically simplify and romanticize that culture, and to paint a picture of a past that perhaps never existed. The literary theorist Dalia Kandiyoti points out that Menéndez's character, Máximo, is "repelled by the way nostalgic discourses and commodities mold multidimensional identities, sentiments, and ideologies into an unchanging, absolute narrative of the past," while at the same time he is unable to escape the inevitable draw of yearning for the familiar (Kandiyoti 83). Máximo is a representative example of the American diasporic narrative and emerges as a complex character who feels the tidal pull of longing for Cuba while living in Miami.

The story reaches its crisis scene when Máximo can take no more of the ogling of the tourists, the snapping shutters of the cameras, and the incessant drivel of the tour guide. He charges at the fence that separates the men from the tour buses. Máximo's action of lunging is akin to that of an angry dog's; the fence separating the two groups underscores the "caged in" feeling Máximo is experiencing, both physically and emotionally. He does not see himself as a something to be gawked at, but he recognizes that in the gaze of the wider culture, he is. He cannot articulate his anger, nor are his

actions planned. He is responding on an emotional level to his own personal sense of loss and to the intricate, comingled elements of history and culture that have brought him to this place in time.

Beyond lexicon, intonations, and inflections, language situates a people on not only a linguistic level, but also on a primal level. The cultural theorist, John Tomlinson, states in *Globalization and Culture*, that, " . . . in terms of the social and cultural orders of human existence, language is unquestionably the 'medium' through which we grasp and relate to the world" (151). Language has the power to connect and disconnect, to turn us toward or away from individuals, groups and things. Menéndez connects her characters through language, but also creates a wedge by what is not said amongst them. In his chapter on Cuban American literature in *New Immigrant Literatures in the United States,* Ricardo L. Ortíz refers to Guillermo Cabrera Infante's opening to his novel *Tres Tristes Tigres* warning to readers that his novel is written in Cuban. Ortíz explains that Infante is not referring to a Cuban dialect of Spanish, but rather to a Cuban way of thinking or being in the world. He further states that one does not necessarily have to write in Spanish to write in Cuban. The question of language for Cuban diasporic writers, he states, is part of the " . . . primal, quasi-Oedipal struggle between mother and father tongues, between a nostalgic struggle for our lost patria . . . and . . . our adoptive patron-nation . . ." (Ortíz 188).

Ana Menéndez, like Cristina Henríquez and other contemporary Latino writers, sparsely trims her characters' dialogue with blossoms of Spanish phrases without italicization, translation or any foreign markers. Incorporating Spanish into a primarily English text tends to subvert the commodification of Spanish and resists the homogeneity

of the dominant culture (Torres 78), which is reflective of a transnational ideology. Menéndez's use of Spanish is very limited, yet it reflects the reality of Cuban diasporic lives. The dominant language eventually replaces the language spoken in the country of origin usually within a generation, except within established, bilingual community-based groups (Rodríguez-González and Parafita-Couto 462). Although Menéndez's characters speak both languages, it stands to reason that they communicate in Spanish although the text is written in English.

Readers can safely assume that Máximo and Raúl have been living in the United States for nearly forty years. They reside in the Cuban enclave in Miami where Spanish is commonly spoken, yet they also need to speak English. Miami is a majority Latino city, but it is not monolithically Cuban. According to a 2013 Pew Hispanic report, Cubans comprise approximately 54 percent of the populace, a combination of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Mexicans comprise 13 percent and 32 percent are from various Central and South American countries such as Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Honduras and Brazil (Brown and Lopez). It is important to note, too, that Cubans themselves are not part of a monolithic Cuban group. Eckstein and Barberia attest to the fact that many generations of Cubans have come to the U. S. Those who came before 1965 had an "assimilationsist" approach, while those who came after 1965 resisted assimilation and had more of a transnational approach to their adoptive country. These groups have been acculturated differently, educated differently, and have varying opinions on the socio-cultural-political milieus of Cuba and the U.S. (Eckstein and Barberia 800-801). They share the common experience of their children growing up in the U.S., with English as their primary language. As parents and participants in the

socio-cultural environment, Máximo and his wife, along with the other Cuban and Dominican families would probably have needed to communicate with schools, government, and other entities beyond the Spanish-speaking world. Taking this into consideration, Máximo, Raúl, Antonio, and Carlos may speak primarily in Spanish to each other, but may also use a combination of Spanish and English, switching from their primary to secondary "code" or language on a subconscious level.

Since the first language of these four men is Spanish, Menéndez underscores most of their expressions of concern, emotion, or surprise in their native tongue, illustrating their deep-rooted linguistic identity. For example, when Máximo poses the question of who first invented the game of dominos, Antonio guesses it was the Chinese. "No jodas," Raúl answers, saying that a game of such skill and intelligence could only have been invented by a Cuban. Antonio answers with a casual curse, "Coño," as he is tired of the inflated statements from his Cuban friends. He has no fear of offending or being misunderstood. In their primary language, these men can connect on a deeper level than they can in English. The scholar Joanne Cormac notes that in the nineteenth century, people began to see language as a deep unity between people of a particular nation (232). She quotes Johann Gottlieb Fitche in his Thirteenth Address from 1808:

> Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together, and are by nature one and an inseparable whole. (232)

Nineteenth century scholars took a "structuralist" approach to language identity, believing that it was something imposed on us from birth, but Cormac cites David Block's concept of poststructuralist theory, noting that it " . . . frames identity as socially constructed, self-conscious ongoing narrative an individual performs, interprets and projects in dress, bodily movements, actions, and language . . ." (234). Through a poststructuralist lens, Máximo and his friends identify with the wider, English-speaking culture to a large extent. But at their core, two are Cuban and two are Dominican; all of them self-identify with their respective nations of origin; all of them comfortably communicate in Spanish and English; but through their limited code-switching, they are signaling to each other and to themselves that at their hearts, they are Cuban or Dominican.

That Menéndez chooses Spanish for the mild profanities the men use is also significant. These words are used in the context of familiarity and brotherhood, not as vulgarities. They use "coño" to express dissatisfaction or frustration. When Máximo is upset at the tour guide's prattling on about how "Most of these men are Cuban and they're keeping alive the tradition of their homeland," Máximo shouts "Mierda! Mierda!" Then follows through with "That's the biggest bullshit I've ever heard" (Menéndez 26). He is resisting being objectified by the mainstream, non-Hispanic public. He is also denying that he is trying to keep his past alive, because that would be tantamount to admitting that his past is dead. His initial curse in Spanish is a signifier of his primary identity. The linguistics professor Deborah Tannen notes, "People who speak more than one language report that they always curse in their native tongue; they can say swear words in the second language but they don't feel them—the gut link to emotions

just isn't there." Máximo's follow through with the English curse word reflects the dual nature of diasporic reality, but his fundamental identity is Cuban. Linguist Timothy Jay explains, " . . . that although individual speakers in one society might learn to speak the dominant language, each person's use of curse words is determined by his or her psychological development within a given linguistic, familial and cultural environment" (Jay 20). Their profanity, then, is more than just an expression of emotion; it serves as a symbol of core identity for Máximo and his companions.

In her article on code-switching, Lourdes Torres posits that incorporating some Spanish words into a primarily English text can be reflective of a multilingual reality and can also be useful in introducing monolingual readers to Spanish in an unintimidating manner (81). However, she presents another side of limited code-switching as possibly "reinforce[ing] monolingual complacency" (81). Torres refers to both bell hooks and Doris Sommers, who warn that analyzing difference with too facile an approach can serve to reinforce the existing power structure and commodify race and ethnicity (82). hooks refers to Standard English as the language of domination. She references a line in an Adrienne Rich poem, "This is the oppressor's language yet I need it to talk to you" (hooks 167). The fact that Máximo, Raúl, Antonio and Carlos all speak Spanish, yet need English to communicate to others reflects the global reality of their situation.

Menéndez touches on the issue of linguistic power structure Máximo's poodle joke, when Juanito, a little Cuban mutt, exclaims to the white French poodle in Miami, "O Madre de Dios, si cocinas como caminas . . . " and the poodle rejoins, "I beg your pardon? This is America, kindly speak English" (28). The color of the poodle is significant, as is her insistence that Juanito (who clearly represents Máximo) speak

English. The social scientist Ann Laura Stoler points out "discourses of sexuality and specific forms of power are inextricably bound" (4). She explains that in the 19th century, "race becomes the organizing grammar of an imperial order in which modernity, the civilizing mission and the "measure of man" were framed." Stoler clarifies how thinking and organizing in terms of race serves to rationalize "the hierarchies of privilege and profit"(27). This rationalization solidifies the immigrant or diasporic Other as a permanent underclass. Through his joke, Máximo self-identifies as part of that underclass, and it profoundly undermines both his sense of stability and his sense of self.

The poodle's response is a by-product of the intertwined histories of the U.S. and other non-English nations, and asserts English language dominance along with a white social hierarchy. Historian Eliga Gould notes that " . . . the history of the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Atlantic worlds is often best approached not from a comparative standpoint, but as a form of interconnected or "entangled" history" (766). In the U.S. white, English-speaking women would tend to see Máximo as the undesirable Other, much as Juanito the dog is disdained by the white poodle. Máximo understands that white women do not desire him; he does not meet the stereotyped standards of the exotic, sexualized Latino male, primarily because he is past his prime. Also, mainstream media constructions of Latino/a desirability focus strongly on Latina exoticness, while according to Latino studies professor, Isabel Molina-Guzmán, " . . . heteronormative Black, Latino, and Asian masculinity remains threatening to the U.S. patriarchal and racial order . . ." (Molina-Guzmán). The level of distaste with which the white poodle addresses Juanito is something with which Máximo would most likely be familiar.

Verbal communication between the men is mostly surface level, dependent on jokes and small talk, but they are able to express themselves on another level that transcends words. The narrator states, "For many months they didn't know much about each other, these four men. Even the smallest boy knew not to talk when the pieces were in play. But soon came Máximo's jokes during the shuffling, something new and bright coming into his eyes like daydreams as he spoke" (11). Through their shared, but not necessarily articulated, dreams the men are able to reconstruct their childhoods and evoke their best images of the places they were from. They participate in a type of social dreaming, in which each is dependent upon the others for a collaborative reconstruction of their homelands.

When Máximo lunges at the fence, passersby might consider his actions irrational, but perhaps he is exhibiting a suitable response to all he has experienced. The theme of *la locura nacional* , or national madness, is a leitmotif in diasporic Cuban literature, which is tied into the concept of traumatic loss. The author Laurie Vickroy says that in the case of contemporary Cuba, " . . . the traumas of revolution, oppression, and dislocation, produce a fragmented, isolated, and dislocated identity and an aesthetic sensibility compelled to both critique and reconnect to homeland" (109). Máximo's unseemly behavior is a symptom of traumatic rupture, displacement and longing to linger in a past that no longer exists. In her essay, "Writing in Cuban, Living as Other, Cuban American Women Writers Getting It Right," Eliana Rivero points out that Cuban American exilic or immigrant "craziness" manifested in "obsessions, wild idiosyncrasies, irrational behavior and madness of characters" appears across the board in Cuban American fiction, regardless of the writer's gender. She states that inappropriate actions

may be indicators of "that alleged dislocation of mind and spirit that accompanies the Cuban exile, the eviction from paradise, the loss of dreams" (115). Máximo has lost his wife, his country, and a meaningful connection with his daughters. His actions, then, are not as crazy as they are a release of emotions he can no longer contain.

Antonio, a Dominican, not Raúl, a Cuban, comes to Máximo's immediate defense. Lucinda runs over to them in anger, but Antonio tells her to leave Máximo alone, saying, "Some men don't like to be stared at is all . . . It won't happen again" (26). In other words, some men have a sense of dignity, a sense of pride, that will not allow themselves to be objectified as Other. That night, Máximo has a dream that he is a beautiful green and yellow fish, sliding and gliding through warm, coral -laden waters. But suddenly he is rising toward the surface, "afraid of the pinhole sun on the other side, afraid of drowning in the vault of blue sky" (27). Máximo is figuratively a Cuban fish out of water. In the American air, he is being suffocated. He cannot breathe.

Antonio and Carlos were not Cuban, but they knew how to play dominoes well, and occasionally even let Máximo and Raúl win. The narrator indicates that when people start to lose over and over again, it reminds them of other losses in their lives. The narrator states, " . . . the despair of it all begins to bleed through and that is not what games are for. Who wants to live their whole life alongside the lucky?" (11). This question underscores a bigger sense of loss for Máximo—the loss of his homeland, the loss of his wife, and the erosion of his identity as it scrapes against the space of Miami decade after decade.

The notion of a substitutive culture is infused in the story when Antonio shows off his new dominos set to the group. Antonio comes to the park one day mysteriously

cradling something in a brown paper bag. With a flair of ceremony, he unveils his prize—an antique ivory domino set, encased in an oblong leather box, a birthday gift from Antonio's daughter. The domino set is symbolic on several levels. The men were used to playing with the plastic dominoes doled out by Lucinda, the woman in charge. The plastic pieces are thin and light compared to the heavy, old ivory and ebony pieces Antonio has presented. The plastic pieces are a substitute for the original, much in the same way American culture is a substitute for the rich, authentic cultures these men come from. The weight of the ivory pieces in his hand, the yellow cast to their surface as opposed to the shiny white plastic of the ones they were using, speaks to Máximo of loss and substitution. The quality of Antonio's dominos far outshines the lightweight plastic dominos the men had grown accustom to, just as the deep-rooted, authentic feel of Cuba had been replaced by the cheaper, surface-level culture of America. When Antonio asks him what he thinks of his gift, Máximo gives a halfhearted "Very nice" (Menéndez18). Antonio takes exception, telling him that his daughter searched all over New Orleans for the gift, and she is coming to visit him for Christmas, and that maybe Máximo should tell her that it's not as nice as some of the gifts he remembers. Antonio is referring to Máximo's habit of glorifying his homeland, implying that the gift is not as good as whatever Máximo remembers from Cuba.

On a deeper level, the difference in the two domino sets is symbolic of the relationships both men have with their daughters. Antonio's daughter is coming to Miami to spend time with her father for Christmas. Máximo has not seen his attorney daughter in two years. Máximo makes excuses, telling the men that she is a district attorney in Los Angeles, and December is one of her busiest months. The scene ends

with Máximo "feeling a heat behind his eyes he had not felt in many years," and Antonio coaxing him to feel the heaviness of the domino piece in his hand (Menéndez 20). The relationship with Máximo's daughters, like Little Havana and the plastic dominos, is also substitutive. In Cuba, Máximo's family would have been sharing a traditional, close-knit family relationship, rather than being dispersed across the country from one another, at least in Máximo's mind. Had he remained in Cuba, perhaps he and his daughters would still be living in the same house, or within walking distance from one another. This is an impossible conjecture, however—one that is part of the diasporic mindset.

The main point of Menéndez's story comes back to Máximo's joke about the poodle and the mutt. Máximo is becoming increasingly edgy, and his dreams and reminiscences of Cuba are appearing more and more in the foreground of his consciousness. He remembers the slaughtering of a pig one Nochebuena, and although it was common practice at the time, it is now deeply disturbing to know that high pitched squealing of the pig reflected its understanding that it was about to be slaughtered. This unsettling memory, the heavy ivory domino pieces, and Máximo's sadness at the prospect of not seeing his daughter at Christmastime are converging within him as he tries to tell his joke about Juanito who comes to the U.S. for the first time. The men interrupt him, making tongue-in-cheek comments as they usually do, but Máximo is tense. When he describes Juanito's awe at all the tall buildings, Raul playfully objects, saying "Hey, hey professor. We had tall buildings" (22). Máximo angrily responds, "This is after Castro, then. Let me just get it out for Christ's sake" (22). He is frustrated not so much by the interruption as by the reminder that Cuba is not what it once was.

Cuba has undergone a radical transformation since Máximo and Raúl fled Cuba. Although Máximo knows this on a subconscious level, the conscious realization of it is jarring. The speed at which major changes occur without his being there to witness them, the distance he feels from his homeland, and the substitutions he meekly accepts for peace of mind, are all starting to press in on Máximo. As Pérez Firmat notes, ". . . imaginings cannot sustain one indefinitely. Sooner or later reality crashes through and the exile loses a place that never was" (8). Máximo's vision of his present reality being skewed with his visions of Cuba is less important than the loss he is experiencing. He is losing his equilibrium in his new country, whether his loss is real, or an image of what once was.

When his friends urge him to continue the joke, Máximo says that they've made him forget. Three times he says that he cannot remember, and one wonders if he is still talking about the joke. In her essay, "Passion and Memory," Marjorie Agosín points out that the commonality of the Latin American diaspora is "a source of creativity and reality, a possibility for transcending and reconstructing history . . . linked to a permanent state of memory" (Agosín XI). Memory, identity and happiness, she asserts, are linked. If Máximo cannot remember, he loses his ties to his own identity. When he blames his friends for making him forget, he is accusing them, on some level, of not holding up their end of the bargain. That bargain, within the diaspora, is to keep alive the collective memory of a place that has now become a thirdspace, constructed of Cuban people and their shared histories, mythologies, language, culture, family, emotion, time, memory, music and nostalgia. The problem with this, as Pérez Firmat notes, is that it cannot be sustained forever.

Through Máximo, Menéndez addresses the issue of transnational identity, living in one place while visualizing and dreaming of another. As Alvarez Borland notes, " . . . the questions asked by Cuban-American writers focus on the relationship between past and present and on the importance of creating identity in the adopted country" (49). In a 2004 interview with Robert Birnbaum, Menéndez comments that the people who went through the process of being exiled have not had a "finish" to their story. She states, "And so there has been no point where they can start over and get on with it" (Birnbaum). On one hand, this creates Otherness for Cubans living in America. On the other hand, the Othering of Cubans in the mainstream U.S. culture is a unique case, because Cubans of the exile generation have consciously remained separate, to some degree, based on the hope or the illusion of return. Menéndez says, "What principally defines the Cubans in this century in the United States is that they have not been able to go back" (Birnbaum). She further states that almost any other group of immigrants that came to the U. S. can return to their countries of origin, although she is not entirely correct in her statement; this would not include undocumented people—not if they wish to return to the U.S. with relative ease. Much like the Cuban diaspora, Otherness itself takes on a hybrid quality for Cuban-Americans.

The entangled histories of Cuba and the U.S. have shaped and is still shaping the identities of those Cubans living in the U.S., as well as those living in Cuba; the rupture of the Cuban narrative is reflected in the literature of the Cuban diaspora. This growing body of work, steeped in the duality of Cuban life, infused with a strong sense of nostalgia, longing and return, attempts to forge a relationship between the past and the present, between *aquí y alla.*

In summary, Ana Menendez's short story, "In Cuba, I Was a German Shepherd," depicts characters who are set apart, literally and figuratively, not only by socially constructed borders, but also by the chain-link fence that divides Domino Park in Miami from the tourists who visit. Máximo, a chronic Cuban exile, recognizes on some level that he, along with Cuba itself, is being commodified and trivialized as an exotic element of a bygone era. His displacement, the superficial relationship with his daughters, the loss of his wife, and his recognition of himself as Other overwhelm him as he lunges at the picture-snapping tourists. In a moment of *locura nacional* Máximo barks curse words at the crowd, releasing his frustration, rage and disappointment.

The tourist gaze energizes the imaginations of Máximo's friends, who don't mind being perceived as exotic, causing them to exaggerate their actions. The contact of the dominant and marginalized cultures creates a pseudo culture that is not fully Cuban or Dominican, and that would not exist without the element of tourism. The men's language, too, identifies them as products of hybridity. They most likely speak in Spanish, the language with which they feel most at ease. Their sentences are seasoned with expressions of familiarity, gentle humor, and mild profanity , identifying the men as Cuban or Dominican at the core.

Máximo recognizes the hollowness of the substitutive American culture and, tragically, recognizes himself as the punch line to one of his own jokes. The veneer on the Eden-like thirdspace that Máximo and the exile community have created of pre-Castro Cuba is beginning to wear thin. Máximo can see himself though the gaze of the wider American culture as inconsequential. The Cuban and Dominican men that play dominos in the park are viewed as exotic by a culture that does not value them on a

deeper level. The language they speak reflects the dual identity of diasporic peoples; the words left unsaid satiate their hearts. The culture of tourism that pervades Miami serves to disrupt the substitutive reality Máximo has built for himself, and reminds him that even after decades have passes, he is not home. When Máximo attempts to hide his tears, the reader realizes that his hurt is deeply connected to the co-mingled history of Cuba and the U.S.; and that his life, and the lives of those living and writing in the Cuban diaspora in the U.S. have been forever and irrevocably altered.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, taught that everything is in flux, everything is always flowing in some manner. Whitman, too, wrote, "all goes onward and outward, nothing collapses." In this dissertation I have been particularly interested in exploring how the ebb and flow of sociocultural dynamisms, such as space, borders, language, race, movement, and systems of power and subordination help to create the Latino Other and inform the work of Latino diasporic writers. I have concluded that the literature produced by the Latino diaspora in the U.S. is undoubtedly shaped by the intersections of historic and socio-cultural constructs that profoundly affect our daily lives. Had masses of Latino people, through elements of displacement and deterritorialization, not been inserted into the existing framework of language, race and culture in America, then the diasporic literature that has been written and continues to be written could not have happened. This may be said of any work of fiction, perhaps, as all writers are responding in some way to the influences of their time periods and cultures. What makes Latino diasporic writing distinct, however, is the salience of Otherness, which is both recurring and pervasive.

Otherness is the social identity of an individual formed by the dominant culture's constructs of race, ethnicity, class and gender. It requires comparison between groups, perceiving similarities and differences, and negotiating the spaces in between the two. Along with these elements are the imposed values of desirability and disapproval, privilege and rejection. I have examined four common threads in each piece of literature,

which are: the recognition of the self as Other, the exoticization of the Latino Other, the commodification of culture through tourism, and the influence of language on national and personal identity. In addition, some unique, unshared characteristics in the literature have surfaced over the course of my inquiry, such as disembodied intimacy, *la locura nacional* and conspicuous invisibility.

Disembodied intimacy refers to a deep feeling of closeness to a family member or loved one, even when that person is separated by geographical distance. Agents of disembodied intimacy are devices such as telephones, computers, and smart phones that allow access to very close and private exchanges between people without physical contact. In Cristina Henríquez's novel, *The Book of Unknown Americans*, when Alma Rivera calls her parents in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, from her apartment in Delaware, she has a transportive experience, as if she could slide through the phone line into her mother's kitchen. Poignantly, though, she senses a vacuum of time and space, a disconnected or amputated effect, because she cannot actually touch her parents, cannot smell the cooking in her mother's kitchen and cannot embrace, in a tangible way, the place that she calls home.

La locura nacional, or national madness, is a leitmotif in Cuban literature that conceptualizes the craziness that can result from a profound sense of loss—not in the traditional sense of losing a family member or lover—but losing a country, a place. Within that geographical place is space that contains multitudes of people, language, heritage, culture, music, memory, and a sense of identity that has been swallowed up by a new country with unfamiliar sights, smells, customs, people, and language that can serve to undermine the core identity of a diasporic person. Ana Menéndez's short story, "In

Cuba I Was a German Shepherd," illustrates the effects of *la locura nacional* when Máximo lunges and curses at tourists photographing him and his friends as they play dominos. With every click of the camera he is reminded that he is Other, something strange and exotic, photo worthy in the touristic gaze of the mainstream culture.

Conspicuous invisibility occurs when a person is physically present in a public place, such as a supermarket, restaurant, or school, but those who are sharing the same space seem go out of their way not to "see" the person. Henríquez's character, Alma Rivera, experiences this when she goes to a restaurant with her husband and daughter to celebrate an anniversary. They toast each other with water since they do not have enough money to afford drinks. Alma is aware that they are taking up space at a table, and feels that others in the restaurant will probably notice and be annoyed. She notices, however, that no one is looking at them; it is as if people are intentionally averting their eyes and trying not to see them. To experience conspicuous invisibility is, in part, to understand what recognition of the self as Other means.

The concept of recognition of the self as Other is where my research veers down a small and brambled path from existing Post-colonial theories on Otherness and Othering, and goes beyond the Self/Other binary. Roberto González Echevarría describes a Latin American obsession with what he calls the "Other Within." He states, "Latin American narrative will deal obsessively with the Other Within who may be the source of all; that is the violent origin of the difference that makes Latin America distinct, and consequently original." (González Echevarría 97). When I use the term recognition of the self as Other, though, I am referring to something else entirely; I am referring to a keen and sometimes painful awareness of how those around us perceive us based solely on

physical and linguistic features. We all have a concept of "me," the "me" that is the living, thinking person experiencing life inside the body each of us has. We recognize, though, at times, that in the gaze of the wider culture, people may see us differently than we see ourselves— perhaps as threatening or desirable, educated or uneducated, attractive or unattractive. People of the Latino diaspora, however, are often judged based solely on their *Latinidad*. Like the speaker in Tino Villanueva's poem "Not Knowing in Aztlan", they cannot be sure how to interpret the gaze of the dominant culture. The speaker states, "You don't know if it's something you did/or something you are." This "not knowing" is crucial to the concept of recognizing the self as Other, because it speaks to the underlying tension between knowing the "me" within the self, and understanding that value judgments are being made by the wider culture based on superficial physical characteristics, such as the color of one's skin or the language or accent with which one speaks.

González Echevarría's concept can be applied to my thoughts on Latino individuals acting, at times, as agents in their own Otherization. For example, Roger Graetz, from Goldman's *The Long Night of White Chickens,* understands that he considered different or "less than" by the American mainstream culture when he is in the U.S., but also by Guatemalans, when he is in Guatemala. Although his American friends call him hurtful names, he chooses to become like them "in every way that seemed to matter." His coping mechanism for recognition of his Otherness is a submergence of the self into the very culture that is oppressing his individuality, thereby participating in the process of his own alterity. He may be choosing the most practical path, however, because he largely self-identifies with the Boston suburban culture, and the only other

alternative would be to go through his life in a state of suspended tension between the cultures in conflict within him.

In her work on Latino Jews, Erin Graff Zivin identifies an impulse to "expel" this stranger within, but she argues that the stronger impulse is to convert and assimilate (19), which is precisely Roger's choice. A thirdspace possibility is the impulse neither to expel nor convert, but to recognize, in the gaze of the dominant culture, the Otherness of the self and to either nurture that self from within or to internalize the oppression from without. Flor de Mayo Puac, Roger Graetz's maid-turned-sister, for example, finds the attention she receives from the white, educated elite amusing. She understands she is of exotic interest to them, and she plays with their fascination with her. Understanding her position in the wider society gives Flor an advantage. She fiercely pursues her education, yet after graduating, rather than adhere to the American consumerist ideal of "living well," she returns to Guatemala to work with other orphans like herself. Flor understands what she needs to be whole, and her return to Guatemala is, perhaps, a way to nurture and heal her soul. Had she lived, it is difficult to say where she would have ended up—in Guatemala, in the U.S., or perhaps in some other place. She is a product of the utopic/dystopic tension that is prevalent in borderland fiction, and her death seems to indicate the dystopic tendency toward entropy.

Mayor Toro, from Henríquez's *The Book of Unknown Americans,* is also ambivalent about his identity because he can clearly see the dual aspects of it. His sense of self is in flux because he is not "allowed" by the wider culture to claim his identity as fully American, yet he experiences a certain hollowness or falsity when he tries to think of himself as Panamanian. He is trying, like Roger Graetz, to submerge his identity into

a culture in which he is Other, but he is reminded almost constantly by Garrett Miller that he does not belong and is not wanted here in the United States. Miller's character represents the worst and most obvious elements of racial bigotry that are easily identifiable and therefore avoidable; however, Miller's prejudicial thoughts represent the filtered down and unarticulated ideas behind the prejudice that is embedded in the interstitials of American culture. Trying to navigate these in-between spaces is the maddening aspect to diaspora, which may prevent a person from feeling fully grounded in his or her self-identity.

Máximo, from Menéndez's *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd,* stands out as one who most self-consciously recognizes his Otherization by the wider culture, as he and his friends are subjects of the tourist gaze. The tour guide presents them as archaic relics of a bygone era. Although his colleagues do not protest to being objectified, and even seem to enjoy the attention, Máximo emerges as a lonely, misunderstood figure. He is aware of his alienation, and Menéndez juxtaposes his predilection for humor with the sadness of his reality, making his plight all the more tragic. Had Máximo been less aware of the significance of the tourists' actions, had he been able to take them in stride like the others, his would be a story hardly worth telling; but the intensity of his feelings, stemming from a profound sense of loss, coupled with the overarching idea that tourists find him exotic in the same way they might find a seashell or a palm tree to be interesting or different, makes Máximo's recognition of himself as Other impactful for readers.

The recognition of the self as Other, then, is a critical tool for placing oneself within the mainstream culture; it is an element of self-awareness that is both painful and necessary in order to self-actualize. Not all people of diaspora experience this element in

their lives, but it is particularly poignant when rendered in literature. This awareness speaks to the complexity of the diasporic vision that is always, as James Clifford notes, "entangled in powerful global histories," and underscores the near powerlessness of the individual to combat against sociocultural forces of this scope and magnitude.

The element of the Exotic appears in all three works, embodied in the characters of Flor, Maribel and Máximo. Both Flor and Maribel are exotic beauties, transplants from another place, another culture; yet they have very disparate elements of exoticism. Flor is a mestiza orphan, highly intelligent and well educated—something that the dominant white culture finds incongruous and appealing. She is considered a "prize," something the white, patriarchal male may aspire to possess. Gloria Anzaldúa, in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera*, discusses the "psychic restlessness" of the mestiza, and the near-constant tension on the self-identity of the Chicana. Although Anzaldúa is referring specifically to the Mexican mestiza, Flor's situation certainly applies. Her restlessness, as she moves between Boston, New York, and Guatemala, is reflective of the edgy anxiousness of one trying to avoid being caged. Flor uses her exoticization to her best advantage, flirting back with the men who desire her, but keeping an emotional distance and all the while working towards her own goals, determined to script the narrative of her life in her terms. Sadly, whether she met too strong an opposition to her fierce spirit, or whether she succumbed to the rampant corruption of the Guatemalan adoption system, she was killed in the process.

Maribel is also distant, beautiful and unusual, therefor exotic, but in another context. Her brain injury makes her seem an easy target to Garrett Miller. She is the exquisite and desirable Other, yet one must pass though a double barrier to connect with

her. Language and culture is the first obstacle, as she is from Mexico, with her own understanding of life and the ways in which she sees the world; the second obstacle is that she lacks the understanding other girls her age would have due to her brain injury, which keeps her isolated from her peers. Miller's pursuit of Maribel summons a connection to colonization and conquest, as Miller sees her through the mythology of white supremacy and also through the paradigm of hunter and hunted. Mayor's approach to Maribel might also be considered suspect, as he is clearly interested in her for her extraordinary good looks. Mayor takes on the role of protector, however, and his interest in Maribel's well-being stands in contrast to Garrett's hyper-masculinity. Also, as the story unfolds, the narrator reveals that she has the capacity to recover from her brain injury and is, in fact, improving. Maribel's exoticism is less salient when she is with Mayor, as he approaches her as an equal rather than an exotic conquest.

Máximo functions as the exotic in "In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd," in that the tourists see him as an attraction or a point of interest during their guided bus tour of Miami. They want to preserve a piece of the exotic Miami culture, infused with elements of Cuba and its bygone era, and feel they can do this by taking photographs to show to others. Even the phrasing "to take a photo" implies taking, or getting something into one's possession by voluntary action such as force, skill or artifice (American Heritage Dictionary). The taking, without permission or consideration, is what Máximo rails against. The people who objectify him have no thought as to his identity, emotions or humanity. The environment in which the tourists and the diasporic come in contact is Domino Park, which is both literally and figuratively fenced in. The enclosure parallels the borderzone culture of Miami and its surrounding suburbs, as well as the division

between Cuba and the U.S.

As much as Máximo sees that he is being exoticized and trivialized, he too, is an agent of exoticization. Cuba becomes exotic over time for Máximo, while his life in Miami becomes mimetic and flat. He longs for his wife, for Cuba, and for his lush, green past, but he buoys himself with constructions of memory and nostalgia, floating in the substitutive culture of Miami. Máximo is resisting the natural force of forgetting by driving himself to remember, creating a dynamic tension between what once was and what he wants to believe it was. He fuels his memories with nostalgia and imagines a Cuba that is the Platonic ideal of itself. The stories that always began with "In Cuba I remember" are filled with the goodness and purity of a utopic vision, one that is becoming increasingly difficult for Máximo to sustain, even as they are being told.

The element of tourism comes most strongly into focus in Menéndez's "In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd," although it is present in all three works. The shared focal point of tourism in these stories is the concept of first world adventurers who try to tame or capture the third world exotic by commodifying and fetishizing culture through the lens of a camera. They want to impress their friends and neighbors with pictures of natives displayed in their photo albums in an effort to prove, perhaps, that it is the tourist, not the toured who is most interesting. But as Edward M. Bruner points out, these images are decontextualized and represent only a hypothetical Other. In an increasingly globalized world, where it is often difficult to find meaning and genuineness, tourists ironically attempt to embrace the authentic through imagination and fantasy. A cooperative system exists wherein both tourist and native work to create a hybrid image of a people or a culture. The image is not authentic, but rather, it is a sanitized first world

ideal imagined by tourists and brought into existence through a performance of culture by natives. In essence, it is the image of an image that both tourist and toured are complicit in creating.

Micho Alvarez, in *The Book of Unknown Americans,* has his own interpretation of what happens when people think they understand a place, a people, or a culture because they have spent a week or two in a tourist zone. Micho points out that going to a resort in Cancún or Acapulco is avoiding Mexico altogether. Resorts are a sanitized, westernized versions of what the first world imagines Mexico and Mexicans should be—smiling people in bright, colorful clothes, serving tall pink drinks garnished with pineapple slices and umbrellas, against a backdrop of dense palm forests flanked by white beaches and thick swatches of turquoise shoreline. Workers in tourist zones accommodate the tourists' expectations, adjusting their behavior to satisfy a version of themselves that is counterfeit. This forged identity creates a new reality, one that is not true to the original culture, and one that may ultimately change it. Micho is not objecting to the idea of a relaxing vacation, but to the fixed perception of Mexican culture that belies the reality behind it.

I examine language on two levels in this study: one, the linguistic choices writers make to convey meaning to their audience; and two, the language choices characters make in order to communicate with each other. All three authors write primarily English texts with only a smattering of Spanish throughout. Their choices reflect the diasporas from which they have emerged, in that all are first generation Americans, educated in English-speaking schools. English, then, is their primary language. Goldman bounces back and forth between English and Spanish more than Henríquez and Menéndez, in

order to further blur the borders between Guatemala and the U.S. Anzaldúa notes that this type of code switching, or sliding from one language into the other and then back again, is common for borderzone cultures.

Goldman italicizes Spanish words and phrases for his readers, often following up with an English equivalent. Henríquez and Menéndez do not italicize, translate, or use markers of any kind when their characters speak in Spanish. Unmarked Spanish resists the commodification of the language and recognizes the legitimacy of its presence in a predominantly English text. Characters' language choices can show intimacy or reflect the core identity of the speaker. For example, Roger and Moya's conspicuous use of the word *vos* in *The Long Night of White Chickens* denotes solidarity between male comrades, and functions as a bonding element between them. Roger also struggles with the translation of certain complex concepts like *fijise*, which brings into focus the larger issue of how to translate, or resist translation of, the self. Walt Whitman's response to the cry of the spotted hawk, "I, too, am untranslatable," comes to mind here. The difficulty in translating a single word suggests the enormity of translating borderzone identities that encompass disparate histories, languages, cultures, and geographies.

In *The Book of Unknown Americans*, Henríquez uses the characters' lack of proficiency in the dominant language to highlight their sense of frustration and anxiety when trying to be understood. Language becomes an agent of Othering when Alma and Arturo try to buy groceries or when they are in a restaurant. Situations like getting lost or missing one's stop on a bus are infused with danger, because there is no easy way to navigate a culture for a person who speaks English only marginally. Garrett Miller, the bully, often follows his vague threats with an exaggerated "Comprende?" insinuating

linguistic supremacy into the dialogue. Language can also have an infantilizing effect, as demonstrated by the Toro family when Raphael needs his son Mayor to help him buy a car. The basic insecurity of many new members of a diaspora, even if they speak the dominant language reasonably well, is that there is always an element of doubt—a fear of not being understood.

The language used by Máximo and his friends places them in a bilingual group within their community. Spanish is their language of home, of intimacy and of identity. It is a way of signifying their closeness and confirming their identity. Expressions of emotion and mild profanity are conveyed in Spanish, which illustrates that through their native language, they are able to effectively communicate their innermost feelings on a primal level. The white poodle in Máximo's joke reminds Juanito of his place in society as a mutt when she asks him to "kindly speak English." Her words, although ostensibly wrapped in humor, convey the secondary position of those who speak English as a second language in a primarily English speaking country. Unspoken feelings pass between the men through their silences and their surface level humor. Beneath the jokes, the cursing, and the silence lies a deep connection based on their shared experience of exile.

Critics such Literary and cultural theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, James Clifford, Arjun Appadurai, and Homi K. Bhabha expand our understanding of diasporic literature by including the lenses of travel, time, space, evolution, language, history, mythology, culture, family, emotion, memory, and nostalgia. All of these elements enhance our perception of what it means to fully belong, or not, to a culture. These cultural theorists widen our traditional geographic conception of border to encompass the

many levels of space between one place and another. I have incorporated their cultural theories into the analysis of Latino diasporic literature in order to access deeper levels of textual meaning.

While these theories, among others, are critical to understanding the concept of Otherness, particularly as it relates to the Latino diaspora, the novels and short stories of Latino diasporic writers enable us to witness Othering in motion. Through the fictionalization of real events, both personal and political, the writers of borderland literature convey intimate knowledge of what it means to be Other, and how recognizing the self as Other is a key element in shaping the Latino diasporic identity. The word Latino encompasses many vastly different countries and the identities of the people from these homelands are not homogeneous. A unique set of historical, political, social and cultural circumstances have shaped each country, and while the literature produced from the diasporas of those countries may share certain commonalities, it would be a mistake to make assumptions about all Latino diasporic literature based on the fiction from one country alone.

Traditional historical discourses give us a one-dimensional view of what world events mean. The dictatorships of Montt, Noriega, Batista, and Castro are a matter of record. But the shifting of mass populations between countries cannot be fully understood without a bird's eye view of how individual lives are affected by these transitions and how they affect personal identity. In the reader-response theory of literature—both reader and writer come together in the space of the text to create meaning. In the same way, when diaspora occurs, space and place comingle and people from disparate backgrounds and situations come together, which creates meaning and

energy in their lives, some positive, some negative. It is within this fusion that diasporic literature is created. This fiction gives us a strategic vantage point into understanding the Latino diasporic experience.

The writers whose works I have examined, Goldman, Henríquez and Menéndez, are themselves, part of the Latino diaspora in the U.S. Their characters, which live their lives in the spaces between past and present, memory and nostalgia, and *aquí y alla*, are informed by a complex interplay of dynamics, which in turn, shape their identities. Francisco Goldman, in an interview with Miwa Messer, reveals that *The Long Night of White Chickens* grew out of his immersion in the "war and nightmare repression of Guatemala" in 1979 (Messer). He is very conscious of the intertwined histories of the U. S. and Guatemala, and set out purposefully to write a story "rooted in historical tragedy and violence" (Messer). Of the three works discussed in this dissertation, Goldman's is the most autobiographical and the most self-consciously aware of the deeply enmeshed relationship and the shared histories between the United States and Guatemala and the effect of that link on characters' lives and how these characters experience the world.

In June of 2014, Cristina Henríquez and interviewer Emily Donahue, noted that the release of *The Book of Unknown Americans* coincided with the advent of thousands of unaccompanied children flooding across the south Texas border. Henríquez acknowledges the unplanned but uncanny timing, remarking, "It's the same story repeated over an over with different groups. So this is just part of our national history and this is the part we live in right now, but in many ways it's not that different from different chapters of the story that have happened in the past" (Donahue). Although Henríquez,

has stated in her NBC interview with Paul Reyes that she was "not interested in a political story," she undoubtedly sees the connection between her fiction and the historical impacts that have shaped her characters. Her novel is not directly autobiographical, but her father is from Panama and she states,

> His story not exactly is in the book, but stories inspired by his are in the book. Which is to say that stories of people uprooting their life and coming here for something else are all throughout the book, and I wanted to give voice to those stories that people don't usually hear or maybe aren't paying attention to (Donahue).

This sense of uprootedness is pervasive in Henríquez's novel and in Latino diasporic fiction in general, and speaks to the elements of upheaval and rupture in the diasporic experience.

The third writer I discuss, Ana Menéndez, self identifies as the daughter of Cuban exiles in an interview with Robert Birnbaum. She is keenly aware of the bearing historical events have had on the people of Cuba, both those who have stayed and those who have left. She is also mindful of the continuum of events that is still ongoing between the U.S. and Cuba. She states,

> When I talk about the political I am talking more about this culture of 'I'm right and you're wrong, therefore you have to go to jail.' [laughs] And that's something that has plagued us from the beginning of the republic. It's been a succession—Castro is only the latest and the longest lived. But he is the latest in a long succession of strong men coming in and knowing

> what's best for everybody and harassing people who disagree" (Birnbaum).

Menéndez, like Henríquez, is interested in the inner lives of her characters, more so, perhaps than the socio-political landscape that has shaped them. Both writers, though, whether intentionally or unintentionally, have integrated the political histories of their characters into their works and have solidified the specter of Otherness in the lives of the diasporic.

In this study I have attempted to set a literary critical paradigm that can readily be used to explore and analyze Latino diasporic literature. By using the four avenues of discovery I have implemented here, readers can unearth layers of historical, cultural, spatial, and sociological complexities from the text. Many philosophers and historians, including Protagoras, Emanuel Kant, and Vladimir Lenin, argue that there is no objective view of history. In other words, what we have come to call knowledge is shaped by our cultural beliefs, our prejudices, and the views of textbook writers, teachers, and other influences that have helped to craft our understanding of the world. In keeping with this point of view, I acknowledge that I, too, have values and assumptions that have, no doubt informed my work. I believe the three works I have chosen are most in keeping with my understanding of how history, politics, and culture have melded to shape Otherness in the collective American consciousness. There is a great deal yet to be explored in the writings of the Latino diaspora, and I am particularly hopeful that with further research, historical and cultural constructions of Latin American Otherness and the recognition of the Self as Other will yield far more comprehensive results than have been achieved in these pages.

APOLOGIA

I am not Latina. I am a white woman, third generation Irish American, who is writing from a position of power and privilege. My study of Latino history, diaspora and literature has been a circuitous journey that started while I was waitressing, years before I bought my first restaurant in Hackensack, New Jersey, in 1991. Working in the restaurant industry means belonging to a fellowship, a subculture of the American panoramic that often resembles a cultural stew of race and ethnicity - the documented working alongside the undocumented, the privileged working alongside the marginalized.

My entry to the world of dining and entertaining was after I had completed my undergraduate degree in English from Arizona State in 1980, when I returned to New Jersey and took a waitressing job at a local country club. By the time I had purchased my second restaurant in 1993, I was working on my master's degree, still in English, this time with a concentration in writing. After graduation, yet sill a restaurant owner, I began teaching part-time at William Paterson University, where I met colleagues who opened my mind to new insights and who would ultimately change the way I came to see the world.

Over a fifteen-year period, the staff at the restaurant was a veritable Mesclun of Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Irish, American, Bangladeshi, Egyptian, Polish, Mexican, Swedish, browns and whites. I often advertised for various positions in the help wanted ads – cooks, dishwashers, busboys and the like. Surprisingly, not once in 15 years did I ever have a "legal" American citizen apply for a dishwashing job, not even a high school student. But every day my door would open and young, tentative, brown

faces would look at me and ask (almost apologetically) "You have job?" or simply, "Trabajo?" Yes, I had jobs, but no Americans that wanted to fill them. So, like most restaurant owners, landscape contractors, sheet rock installers, bricklayers, and others, I hired undocumented workers—not to take advantage of them, but to keep the doors of my business open. I saw how hard they worked, how much they missed their families. I saw them ride their bicycles home in the snow at three o'clock in the morning. They never called in sick, and would not even entertain the thought of going to the emergency room for a cut or burn, dispelling much of the mythology surrounding them.

When INS was still intact (Immigration and Naturalization Service), they had started making mass raids of factories, restaurants and meat packing plants across the country. My staff and I would watch TV in the mornings before we opened, and we saw men, women, and teens being led out of factories in handcuffs. They were being arrested for working at their factory jobs – right off the assembly lines – just for being undocumented, which I later learned is not a criminal offense, but rather, a civil one. Everyone looked nervous and asked me what to do if we got raided. We made a stupid plan, because that's all we *could* do – two would go up into the office, two would go down by the slop sinks in the back basement, two would try to slip out the back and jump over the fence that separated up from our neighbors, a Hackensack firehouse. Just as we were intensely discussing strategy, the beautiful, blue-eyed, porcelain-skinned bartender asked, "Suzie, where should I hide?" and we all laughed. I said, "Jess, they're going to run right by you and say, 'Where are all the Mexicans?'" Jess was from Canada, also undocumented. There were two Irish waitresses, a Swedish bartender, a Polish bartender, and two Canadians, all undocumented. And that's when it hit me—the anti-immigrant

sentiment in this country and the mass deportations are racially motivated. People are being targeted because of the way they looked and because of the accents with which they speak. A friend of mine, a landscaper, said his workers were nervous too. One asked my friend if he thought the arresting officers would let him go to his apartment to take a shower and put on a clean shirt before they arrested him. He was aware of the stereotype of the "dirty Mexican" and did not want to make a bad impression.

I joined an immigrants' rights advocacy group called First Friends and started visiting the Bergen County Jail in Hackensack that houses undocumented immigrants for ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). One of the men I visited, Job, was from San Raymundo, Guatemala, and he told me of the gang violence that plagues his country. I had already completed my master's degree and was working on a doctorate. I began to take courses on diaspora and space, and to read and study Latino literature. I studied Just War Theory, and researched the history of U.S. interventions in Guatemala. I had heard many stories from restaurant workers and from detainees, of their pre- and post-America lives, and I was curious to see what was reflected in the literature of the Latino diaspora. The more I learned the more apparent it became that nothing, nothing is unaffected by the transversals of history, culture, and society.

These are the events that started me on the path to writing this dissertation. I understand that I am an outsider to this inquiry, and have no more than a tangential claim to it. However, if my observations can shed even a narrow shaft of light on any aspect of Latino diasporic literature, I will be gratified to have contributed in some small way.

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