Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Sprach- und literaturwissenschaftliche Fakultät
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Projekttutorium

Handbook

Decolonizing the U.S.-Mexico Border

&

Queering the U.S.-Mexico Border

Summer Semester 2022 & Winter Semester 2022/23

Course Coordinator: Andreas Büchler

March 2023

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Introduction

Andreas Büchler

In her seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa famously called the U.S.-Mexico border "*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (2012, 25). 36 years after its publication, this statement continues to describe the conditions as well as the discourses surrounding the U.S.-Mexico border. Former U.S. president Donald Trump's comments about migrants crossing the border as well as his plans to build a border wall have turned the spotlight on the border once again, while his successor Joe Biden has kept many of the previous administration's controversial policies intact (Korte and Gomez 2018; Blitzer 2021). Even in the first three months of 2023, the border has made headlines due to a renewed "crackdown on illegal border crossings" (Shear and Sandoval 2023). The current situation is complicated by a roughly two hundred year-long fraught history. The cession of the northern half of Mexico by the United States in 1848 – an area stretching from what is today California to Texas, a fourth of the continental U.S. – caused tens of thousands of Mexican citizens to be on U.S. territory overnight (Gonzalez 2000). As a popular slogan during the Chicano movement clarified: "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us" (Lourdes 2016, 127n33).

The academic examination of the U.S.-Mexico border often revolves around similar narratives and conceptual frameworks. The field of border studies as a whole has tended to privilege questions of nation and citizenship (Wastl-Walter 2011; Wilson and Donnan 2012). This normalization of nation states and citizenship needs to be seriously reconsidered, given that, as Amy Brandzel has pointed out, the "ever-lingering promise of citizenship has been one of the most resourceful tools for producing and maintaining anti-intersectional, anti-coalitional politics" (2016, 4). Consequently, this project tutorial aimed to move away from this paradigm and instead attempted to reframe discussions of the U.S.-Mexico border by employing two different epistemologies – decolonization and queering –, resulting in a reexamination of the border. Each semester focused on one of these methodologies, respectively.

Additionally, the tutorial sought to go beyond the frequently deracinated research on the U.S.-Mexico border by examining the discourse around it from a Chicana/o/x studies perspective. Like the border itself, the field of Chicana/o/x studies (as well as broader Latina/o/x studies) – caught in the interstitial space between the United States and Mexico – continues to be sidelined in both American and Latin American studies in the U.S. and in Europe. If one considers that Latinas/os/xs or Hispanics make up nearly 20% of the U.S. population according

to the most recent census data (and two-thirds of them claim Mexican heritage), it becomes clear that there is a significant blind spot in the research regarding such perspectives (Jones et al. 2021). Additionally, ethnic studies programs and critical race theory have recently come under renewed criticism, particularly from Republicans in the U.S., even leading to bans on teaching such topics in schools (Schuessler 2021). This has also directly affected Chicana/o/x studies, for example through legislation like HB 2281, a bill passed in Arizona in 2010 that banned Mexican American studies from curricula statewide; it was later revoked by a federal court for being unconstitutional (Depenbrock 2017). Given these circumstances as well as the direct connection of such discourses to the U.S.-Mexico border, I specifically intended to highlight these perspectives in the project tutorial.

Ultimately, the tutorial sought to question dominant discourses of the U.S.-Mexico border and challenge the nationalistic and Western perspectives that are often taken for granted, even in otherwise 'progressive' contexts, including academic ones. By centering Chicana/o/x perspectives combined with decolonial and queer epistemologies, the tutorial attempted to reframe border discourses, including posing the question of who benefits and who suffers from such a randomly drawn line, given its continual and recurring violent effects.

This handbook presents the results of this engagement with the U.S.-Mexico border. Each session focused on a specific aspect of the border through the semester's overarching theoretical perspective. At the end of each semester, every participant wrote an entry giving an overview of a key term or aspect of a session, thereby not only highlighting the class discussions, but also clarifying their own standpoint on it. As such, these entries are the products of their respective authors; I have not changed their contents. They also reflect the heterogeneity of the group, as students from various academic fields and backgrounds use different citation styles and writing conventions, which I've left intact. The entries' length necessarily means that they are highly condensed and thus can only represent a small portion of our discussion. Likewise, the limitations of the class also entailed that not all aspects of the tutorial ultimately received their own entry. Instead, the entries should be seen as a starting point and inspire interest for further reading.

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Decolonizing the U.S.-Mexico Border

Andreas Büchler

The first semester employed decolonization as a framework to examine the U.S.-Mexico border, influenced by scholarship in Chicana/o/x and Indigenous studies. Given the fact that the United States is a settler colonial state (and arguably Mexico is as well), the question of land and who can lay claim to it is relevant to examinations of the border in ways that are often left out of the discussion. As the principal aim of settler colonialism "is the elimination of Indigenous populations in order to make land available to settlers," it inspires posing questions about the legitimacy of a border line drawn between two settler colonial states (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, 10).

Decolonization has been of the responses by Indigenous peoples to settler colonialism. In their influential article, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have criticized the dilution of the term and its appropriation and conflation with other broader aims of social justice. They have stressed that "decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (2012, 21). As questions of land are central to discussions of the border, their definition asks what it would mean to decolonize the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly given the United States' dispossessing of both Indigenous and Mexican land. It also poses the question which role Mexico has in this discussion.

In a Chicana/o/x context, Emma Pérez's concept of the decolonial imaginary figures prominently in considerations of decolonization. In her eponymous book, Pérez attempts to rupture established historical narratives which are taken for granted and to reveal through their deconstruction why some narratives are emphasized while others are deliberately silenced or erased (1999, 6). Locating the decolonial imaginary in the "time lag between the colonial and postcolonial," Pérez attempts to break up binaries and identify histories which are based on settler colonialism but also reveal possible counternarratives which subvert them (ibid.).

Roberto Hernández, while drawing on Tuck and Yang as well as Pérez's work, more specifically locates this discussion at the U.S.-Mexico border. He clarifies that the so-called 'modern world' is based on coloniality, the world order which is a result of colonialism, and consequently reads the border as a colonial construct (2018, 3-4). Hernández critiques the normalization of violence at the border and points out how such violence is often portrayed as unrelated singular instances (2018, 11). Instead, he argues for a "historicizing of border violence given the coloniality of power in the modern/colonial world", pointing out that this would reveal

the structural foundations of border violence, which are rooted in the continuity of coloniality as the basis of modernity (2018, 12).

What then does it mean to look at the border from a historical perspective and employ a decolonial lens? What changes when the U.S.-Mexico border is revealed to be a settler colonial construct? Is the violence at the border the result of the genocidal logic of settler colonialism? What does that entail for efforts to resist it? These were questions that were discussed during the semester and the entries reflect them in various ways. Together, the entries of this part of the handbook seek to illuminate the ways in which decolonization can serve as a tool to critique normative discourses surrounding the U.S.-Mexico border, reframing histories and subverting national narratives to question justifications or explanations for border violence.

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(The) Alamo

Ángel Manuel Larruiz

The Alamo, scene of a massacre in the borderland dispute between the U.S. and Mexico centered in the recently independent region known as Texas in 1835 looms large in American folklore. Many movies and books use the historic event as a core plot element; similarly, cultural legacies revolving around the broader meaning attached to the various depictions of the battle itself and its aftermath abound. Some of these reinforce the notions of patriotic sacrifice, personal reinvention, and financial gain the U.S. has long trumpeted as endemic to its national sovereignty and proof of Manifest Destiny that characterize the colonial imaginary; others challenge the concept of unilateral depictions inherent in the tales of victors, substituting "counter narratives" of actors traditionally ignored. Specifically, the rallying cry of the Alamo, remembrance, underscores the struggle for cultural legitimacy in the wake of military defeat, in this case, turning a complete disaster into an iconic display of resistance, bravery, and (given its decisive reversal in the ensuing Battle of San Jacinto, which settled the question of who would rule Texas) vindication for American colonial settlers. Ironically, "remembering" the Alamo requires acknowledging more than the aspirations and challenges of Anglos eager to annex Mexican (and rightfully speaking, indigenous) land: even the vanquished continue to contribute meaningfully to saga of Texas.

One such instance involves a comparison between the 2004 movie version of *The Alamo* (Hancock 2004) and two novels written by women, *Inéz: A Tale of the Alamo*, by Augusta Evans, and *Forgetting the Alamo, or, Blood Memory*, by Emma Pérez (Roybal 2022). The movie highlights the possibilities afforded colonial settlers by taking Texas from Mexico by force, the promise of new beginnings for Texas Anglos, including the chance to become – perhaps – "better men" (Hancock 2004). Nevertheless, the fact that these invaders included advocates for slavery that did not even consider the rights of indigenous peoples with a much longer claim to the contested land or the Tejanos that got caught in the crossfire between dueling colonial settler nations apparently does not stop the movie from being hailed as largely historically accurate (Selcraig 2004). The novels, on the other hand, focus on the stories of Mexican women as protagonists that challenge traditional pillars of colonialism in what ultimately becomes the U.S. such as the Catholic Church, the Texas Republic, restricted gender roles, and sexual mores. "The gendered cultural memories illuminated in these novels disrupt dominant normative assumptions about history and historical events by drawing attention to the active processes of forgetting that erases ethnic Mexican women's experiences" (Roybal 2022,

63). The voices unleashed in the two novels constitute a "corrective" for the deliberate whitewashing of history the movie perpetuates, a decolonization of memory by dint of balancing of the historical record through inclusion.

James Bowie, David Crockett, Stephen Austin, and Sam Houston will rightly remain iconic figures in Texas lore: they played outsized roles in the formation of the fledgling independent republic and subsequent (Confederate) state of the Union. Nonetheless, the violence and chauvinism of the Anglo settlers of the U.S. – Mexico borderlands along with the racial aspect of a war against Mexicans (and indigenous peoples) must not be overlooked: those elements form the core of the situation. Similarly, the contributions of women and nonbinary folk deserve consideration – particularly in light of cultural memory. The story of a nation involves much more than the myths of plunderers. While not a panacea for national consciousness, inclusion in the guise of a decolonial imaginary cannot be ignored. As Pérez notes: "Maybe the only justice we'll ever know is in surviving to tell our own side of things. Maybe that's enough for now. Telling our own stories so we won't be forgotten" (Pérez 2009, 206).

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Anthropology

Marie Pouvreau

"The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary"[1], says Māori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999). Her work underlines the ties of academic research with colonial and imperialist history, its impact on Indigenous people around the world and the appropriation of their knowledge and perspectives. Anthropology is one of the social science disciplines that are directly linked to colonization: its origin can be found in ethnology, which since the 15th century was used to study colonized population, their cultures, and develop in opposition the Western ideal of the civilised man. Ethnologists collaborated with imperialist countries to implement better control of colonized population, helped to shape racial stereotypes and eugenics. Anthropology, as the study of human beings, their populations, societies and cultures (amongst other), took over through the 19th century, questioning ethnological conclusions but ultimately taking part in the same conceptualization of "the Other". Colonialism is therefore not only linked to but at the origin of modern anthropology, its main methods and objects. It is important to keep this in mind when discussing anthropology at the U.S.-Mexico border, which is also a colonial/neo-colonial setting.[2] Some anthropologists have, since the 20th century, challenged the researcher/object relationship with people in the field, inherited from this colonial history; but only recently have Indigenous researchers and activists been heard in the academics about ethics issues in anthropology. As introduced, Linda Tuhiwai Smith conducted consequential research on methodologies and how to question the colonial relationships reproduced through anthropology (with examples from the Māori context in Aotearoa/New Zealand); we could also mention specific guidelines produced by Indigenous people for researchers, like the "Guidelines for Research with Aboriginal Women"[3] published by the collective Quebec Native Women. From those texts we can extract four main points to reflect on, that could be used as a first guideline for all anthropology research, regardless of the context: the position of the researcher (acknowledging privileges and prejudices, questioning our judgement and western knowledge/framework); the gathering of information (time of the research, questioning

[1] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London/New York, Zed Books, 1999, p. 1.

[2] Even though the relationship is not mainly one of settler/indigenous, it is at least one of historical domination of the imperialist U.S.-Americans over racialized Mexicans and other Central and South-American migrants – colonial dynamics are still relevant.

[3] Quebec Native Women, "Guidelines for Research with Aboriginal Women", Kahnawake, Quebec Native Women Inc., 2012.

appropriation, valuing Indigenous/subject knowledge and perspective); the interest of the research for its subjects (giving back to the community, both knowledge- and financial-wise); and the production of knowledge (implication from the subjects in the final production, accessibility of the research, supporting indigenous researchers). Thereby if we want to defend decolonial anthropological studies, methods need to be changed and every step of the research needs to be questioned. Is anthropology even compatible with decolonial studies, and decolonization in general? To try and answer this question and highlight both the use and limits of anthropology, we can look at studies at the U.S.-Mexico border, and take the example of Jason De León's *The Land of Open Graves. Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (2015)[4]. The author, a Mexican/Filipino-anthropologist, attempts in this research to "[document the] largely undocumented stories"[5] of Mexicans and people from Central and South America who try to cross the U.S.- Mexico border through the Sonoran Desert of Arizona. He portrays the violence that occurs both before, during and after the crossing, mainly basing his research on interviews in and in-between the border-town of Nogales, Altar (both Mexican cities) and the deserts of Tucson Sector, as well as forensic and archaeological data. His methods include questioning his privileges in encounters with populations, but also further challenging the position of the researcher, by choosing not to cross the border with migrants or use participant observation (because of his privilege of having papers, the risk of still getting arrested, the potential disruptiveness of joining the trip – making it abnormal –, and to avoid focus on the experience of the writer). As part of his bigger Undocumented Migration Project (long-term study), De León's anthropological research contributes to showing the violence of life and death in the Sonoran Desert, but also to underline that this violence is constructed and organized by the U.S. and its Prevention Through Deterrence policy, as an invisible border that kills "illegal" migrants. Even though the author questions his position as a researcher, we can address some critiques to his methods and text. First of all, the book is clearly written only from his point of view, and the only migrant-perspective can be seen in transcription of interviews, yet the author claims to want to represent those people. We can question here if they feel represented (as the book doesn't seem to be addressed to them but rather to a western/academic public, we can assume they didn't read it), if representation is enough to move towards decolonizing the border, and if speaking for others – rather than with others, for example – isn't a problematic

[4] Jason De León, *The Land of Open Graves. Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2015.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 5

anthropological method.[6] Furthermore, De León is quick to explain his positionality, both as a documented person but also as a man: the question of what it produces in his text, point of view, analysis, form and impact of his production remains unanswered. Finally, as mentioned before, the book doesn't seem to be conceived as a tool for migrant people crossing the border, either to help gathering information that could be useful to them or to start their own research... We don't know anything about potential retribution, material, intellectual of financial for the people who invested their time in participating in the study, other than "representation". The book is clearly written from an academic U.S. citizen perspective and addressed to similarly U.S.-American academics (or informed readers).

Jason De León's text highlights some issues that modern anthropology, even if questioning its methods, can still have regarding its ties with colonial perspectives and history. To conduct research on the U.S.-Mexico border, but also in other contexts, scholars should constantly question their position and positionality, be open to positive contingency but also to refusal, dead-ends, accepting that some realities cannot be perfectly or completely grasped by the academics,[7] and even questioning the role of university: are we trying to comment from afar or do we have the ambition to participate in actual decolonization, both of our fields and societies? As "decolonization is not a metaphor"[8], we should question how our research contributes to concrete improvement of the lives of people we do our research with, to challenge what we call knowledge but also so-called western "rights" (to the land, to property – material and intellectual –...). Only then, anthropology and research can be decolonial.

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[6] On this subject, see Linda Alcoff, "The problem of Speaking for Others", *Cultural Critique*, 1991-1992, n° 20, pp. 5-35.

[7] De León acknowledges this: "you can never get full comprehension of what is *actually* happening on our southern frontier", p. 9.

[8] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor", *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2012/1, n° 1, pp. 1-40.

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Border Policing

Mara Pöhls

Border patrol has two definitions depending on capitalization. The first defines the term as "a patrol sent to keep watch over an area along a country's border". Capitalised, spelled Border Patrol, the term refers to "an agency within the US Department of Homeland Security responsible for preventing the illegal entry of aliens as well as terrorists and their weapons into the United States" (Lexico 2022). Border Patrol policies the borders such as the US-Mexico border. Further, the term patrol alone as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary an act "(especially of soldiers or the police) to go around an area or a building to see if there is any trouble or danger" (Cambridge Online Dictionary 2022). The definition already shows specific narrative perpetuated in border politics that border patrols are necessary for protection from the other which is painted as dangerous.

While the policing of the US-Mexico Border through means like the Border patrol and fencing is a comparatively recent development, the dispute over the border is longstanding with and entangled historical background through with the previously mentioned narrative of borders for protection from the other is strong. Therefore, it is helpful to have a grasp of the general timeline as outlined by Vargas (2017) that led to current Mexico-US relations and border patrol as well as policing measures. It makes sense to start in 1826, a long while after both the Spanish and Anglo-Saxons started colonising the Americas. There had been tensions before then but after the Mexican War of Independence (1810-1821) and a failed alliance between Anglos and Mexico/ The Cherokee disputes between Mexicans and Anglos increased over Mexico outlawing slavery in 1924 and Anglos refusing to leave what had become Mexico in the war. This resulted in Anglo immigration to Mexico being restricted in 1930, meaning budding of border policing along the US Mexico border. In turn, this led to the Battle of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836 with Texan independence and US Annexation of Texas in 1845 drawing a harsher border (for more on the Alamo refer to the entry on the Alamo). The ongoing disputes over the border territory resulted in the US-Mexico War (1846-48) which went hand in hand with the militarisation of the area the following Treaty of Guadalupe shifted the border again and after the 1853 Gadsden Purchase the US-Mexico border resembled today's placement (Vargas 2017). At this time the border was loosely marked by piles of stones with unrestricted movement back and forth (NYT News 2020).

All this was the precursor to later developments, such as the mass migration of Mexicans across the border between 1880 and 1900 to work on the extension of the railroads meeting in

El Paso for low wages (compared to US workers), and 1910 and 1920 during the Mexican Revolution which led to more US military forces being sent to the border (Vargas 2017). "How Walls Ended Up Along the U.S.-Mexico Border" an NYT News video (2020) further recounts that throughout this time different forms of policing the border developed, not all of them about deterring Mexican migrants. In 1891 the piles of stones were replaced with more accurately agreed upon stone monuments and in 1897 a 6 ft wide path was cleared at the border to prevent smuggling of goods and tax evasion. Later, border fences were put up to prevent the spread of disease which was closely followed by fences being but up to keep people out in 1918 due to several reasons: The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which banned Chinese immigration to the US and came with increased policing of ports led to increased migration through Mexico which was only added to by the Mexican Revolution. Another reason militarisation was increased is WWI. During this time the tension at the border increases on both sides. In the 1920s official Border Patrol was established following a series of Immigration Acts and the fencing was enforced to keep up with a growing population and deal with the US prohibition. WWII marks the start of stricter border policing and fewer ways for Mexicans to legally enter the US which simultaneously starts a cycle of increased "illegal" migration which is then again followed by increased policing. 9/11 in 2001 brings renewed enforcement under the guise of protection, this time of national security instead of the economy (NYT News 2020).

This increased demand for national security is also brought into existence one of US border policing's biggest actor *ICE* (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), the agency of the Department of Homeland Security that was established in 2003 because of the Homeland Security Act ("History of ICE"). Both ICE and the Border patrol have been highly criticised for their inhumane measures and racist tactics as they were born from Acts rooted in xenophobia. Migrants and potential migrants were tortured or even brutally killed as the Border Patrol employed former Ku Klux Klan members. Despite critique both agencies push deportation and rely heavily on racial profiling. Their power is reinforced by laws criminalising migration which makes it difficult for migrants to report the violence (see Grandin 2019 and Schreiber 2012).

Another tactic used in border policing is "Prevention Through Deterrence" (PTD) which was first used in El Paso, Texas in 1993. Its main premise is to heavily police borders within larger border cities which are generally safer to cross. This, in turn, forces undocumented migrants to take life threatening paths through the desert and endure increased violence with often results in death. Through these deaths successful "illegal" migration is prevented and unsuccessful migration undocumented with minimal claims to responsibility on the side of the US government (De León 2015).

Decolonial perspectives or at least perspectives critical of this border policing are shown in all kinds of media like literature and songs as well as art installations. A lot of scholars agree that the border is a very contested space and that the line drawn is arbitrary but creates sometimes precarious realities for many people occupying that space.

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Settler Colonialism

Lilly Ostendorf

Settler colonialism is an omnipresent system of power that reproduces the marginalization, repression and genocide of indigenous peoples. Settler colonialism exists as an extension and/or alternative to the classic notion of exploitative colonialism. The exploitative and traditional understanding of colonialism is commonly described as the expropriation and extradition of indigenous peoples, animals and plants. This could entail slavery, the import of goods such as tobacco, oil, tea, spices…

Settler colonialism functions in a more complex way, as it implies a struggle for power with indigenous peoples, the institutionalization of a new political and social order on stolen land, which aligns with the settlers' way of life. The settlers achieve full hegemony over the soil and non-colonizers, reinstating their ideology and (ab)using their power for space and resources. As Tuck & Yang (2012) coin it, colonizers arrive with the intention of creating a new home for themselves. In order to create a reality similar to their origin country, the conquered space is required to be *blanked out*. This explains why settler colonialism is symbiotic with genocide. Wolfe once stated that "[t]he question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism. Land is life – or, at least, necessary for life" (qtd. in Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, 2).

In order to further understand the post-colonial term of settler colonialism, one might shed light on a more-so prominent example, the United States of America. This country can be used as a prime example of settler colonialism, its' history tarnished (not only) by the unsettling and gruesome events following an ideology called *Manifest Destiny*. The need for expansion of land and power by the European settlers instigated as what was previously referred to as a struggle for power between them and the indigenous peoples. To avoid the reduction of severity and romanticization of these events, it is better described as a genocide. The Europeans saw themselves as destined to discovering more and more land, their curiosity leading them to kill and rule other peoples. The Europeans imposed their political, societal and religious beliefs onto indigenous peoples. If the indigenous peoples did not align with their ideology, or showed resistance to doing so, they had to be punished and killed. In the eyes of the settlers, the indigenous peoples lost their natural right to the land the moment the colonizers stepped foot on their soil.

As mentioned before, settler colonialism is an institution which requires violence to attain its' goals. Any peoples that do not hand over their land, resources, children and futures

are met with a fight and violence. Once again alluding to the example of the United States, four historic policies prove the genocide on part of the U.S. administration: The Jacksonian Era of Forced Removal, the California Gold Rush in Northern California, the Post-Civil War Era of the "Indian Wars" and the 1950 Termination Period.

Settler colonialism normalizes the further occupation of exploited lands and resources. Settler Colonialism persists deeply engrained in U.S. Society, showing itself in more subtle, yet recognizable forms. In academia, it is still not fully acknowledged that the US is a colonialist settler state, which along with other factors continue to reproduce the power dynamics from long ago. Settler Colonialism persists deeply engrained into U.S. society, showing itself in more subtle, yet recognizable forms. The irony of one of the most acknowledged universities in the Western hemisphere being named after one of the most brutal colonizers, Christopher Columbus. The National Holiday referenced to as Columbus Day. The existence of reservations, through which people of indigenous heritage are geographically separated from the entirety of soil their ancestors used to claim as their own. Mining and oil extractions taking place on similarly so-called indigenous ground in Alaska. The numerous statues, spread across the world, representing horrible, blood- and power thirsty colonizers. History classes and academic scholars failing to recognize the very own country's problematic past.

The list could run on and on. These examples represent a glimpse into how the narrative, shaped by colonial settlers, is perpetuated until and beyond today. The introduction of a term such as settler colonialism, the raising of awareness of how we ourselves reproduce power hierarchies that are commonly understood as historical and irrelevant and claiming responsibility can be seen as a step towards decolonization. Reframing history and making space for non-hegemonic narratives to shape our understanding of colonialism could offer a reimagination of what is to come. History is not to be understood as linear, chronological events. Our past is intertwined with our present and future selves. To live in ignorance of the past, is also a form of ignoring of responsibility and present opportunities.

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Queering the U.S.-Mexico Border

Andreas Büchler

Attempting to define what queer means is a challenging endeavor, given its multiple meanings and usages. While the term queer has been increasingly employed as an identity marker for individuals who do not adhere to heterosexual norms, in a more theoretical conceptualization, the term can also be understood as an action. To queer something then is to destabilize fixed meanings and to challenge normative concepts and frameworks (Weise 2022). Therefore, the second semester of the tutorial sought to destabilize and question the binary which the U.S.-Mexico border inherently produces. Guided by writings from scholars in Chicana/o/x and queer studies, we questioned the binaristic formations around the border's discourses.

Conceptualizing the U.S.-Mexico border from a queer perspective virtually demands consideration of Gloria Anzaldúa's seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera*. An amalgamation of various writing styles, merging theory and poetry, history and autobiography, and mixing Spanish, English and various other languages, the book formally demonstrates its main argument: The border is a liminal space, which she calls "borderlands," where multiple converging and contradicting forces collide, thereby producing queer subjects (Anzaldúa 2012, 100). Anzaldúa describes this process as both painful and creative (ibid., 102). In queering the border, Anzaldúa destabilizes its inherent binaries and reveals the pointlessness of such a randomly drawn lined which, despite contrary intentions, can never truly prevent the mixing of the two sides it separates (ibid., 23-25, 102-103).

Simultaneously, queer frameworks' application in racialized contexts have also been critiqued because to their proximity to whiteness. A countermovement to queer frameworks within Chicana/o/x studies specifically, yet also originating from Anzaldúa's work, is a jotería framework. Similar to the term queer itself, jotería reclaims a derogatory term and reconfigures its meaning in order to critically examine questions of gender and sexuality in a way that queer does without limiting itself to these categories (Hames García 2014). The benefits of using a culturally specific and more holistic term which also includes dimensions of race, class, among others are still being debated in the field.

Apart from such theoretical discussions, the connection between queerness and the border is epitomized in the ways in which gender and sexuality are policed there. Eithne Luibhéid (2002) points to a long history of such policing that begins shortly after its inception in the 19th century. Of course, gendered violence in the border region has occurred for much longer than that and can be traced back to colonial times, for example through the eradication

of gender-nonconforming Indigenous peoples by Spanish colonizers (Miranda 2010). This example also illuminates the connection between the two semesters of the tutorial, as it points to the origins of gender-based violence as a function of settler colonialism, a structure which is still in effect today. It can be seen both in the inconceivable number of femicides occurring in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez region since the 1990s or the everyday persecution of trans migrants on both sides of the border (Arriola 2010).

Of course, women and gender-nonconforming individuals, Indigenous and Chicana/o/x, as well as other minority groups, have continually attempted to contest this violence through subversive practices, resisting in various forms, such as art and performance as well as protest and community support (Anzaldúa 1993; Arriola 2010). These forms of resistance suggest possible ways to fight back against, or at least undermine, the power structures which still cause violence at the border on a regular basis. Therefore, the entries of this part of the handbook attempt to expand on these various aspects which were discussed during the semester. They discuss both the viability of theoretical frameworks from queer studies to analyze the border, but also the specific mechanisms of policing gender and sexuality at the border and the consequences of this for people who face discrimination as a result.

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Borderlands

Miriam Meksem

The borderlands, as defined by Chicana feminist, and lesbian activist and scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa, is a term that refers both to borders in a physical sense, such as a geographical boundary between nations, or in a symbolic sense, such as a boundary between social classes, races, or genders. In her seminal work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, first published in 1987, Anzaldúa draws attention to the complexities of living at the intersections of different cultural, linguistic, and social borders, focusing particularly on the experiences of people living on the United States-Mexico border. In writing on these topics, she draws from a starkly personal perspective.

Anzaldúa's work on the Borderlands was ground-breaking, as it marked the first time that the experiences of Chicana women had been brought to the forefront of the discourse on cultural and linguistic blending. Anzaldúa argues that the borderlands are a space of both oppression and liberation, where people are forced to navigate the tension between their cultural identities and the dominant cultural norms of the societies in which they exist. She asserts that the borderlands are a site of ongoing struggle, where people must continuously negotiate their place in the world and find a way to assert their cultural and linguistic heritage (Anzaldúa 2012, p. 25f.).

From this space of negotiation, according to Anzaldúa, grows what she calls a new mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa 2012, p. 99ff). This consciousness encompasses the experiences of people who straddle multiple conflicting cultures and who as a result are conscious of these multiple cultural identities and the internal contradictions of each. This consciousness, Anzaldúa argues all but forces those who experience it to question the norms imposed by these cultures and to question all cultural norms. In that, the new mestiza consciousness becomes a form of resistance to dominant cultures and a means of healing and empowering marginalized communities (Anzaldúa 2012, p. 104).

The new mestiza consciousness can conceptually be applied to many contexts and many forms of in-betweenness. It is however, in its origin, very much embedded in the particularity of the US-Mexico border and beyond that, in a feminine and a feminist perspective of life on this border. This perspective is reflected in the term itself, with the word mestiza referring to a woman (as indicated by the ending 'a' as opposed to the masculine 'o' or gender-neutral/expansive forms such as 'x' or '@') of mixed ethnicity.

As Anzaldúa writes prominently from her standpoint as a Chicana lesbian, the boundaries of gender and sexuality and the consciousness of those who inhabit their borderlands feature prominently in her work on these concepts. These are not treated as separate from the categories of culture, language, nationality, and race in proximity to the border, but as inherently entwined with them. For example, Anzaldúa describes her own mestiza identity and its potential for liberation as such:

> As a mestiza, I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman´s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture (Anzaldúa 2012, p. 102f.)

These concepts have since been taken up by a number of other scholars and activists, who have used Anzaldúa's work as a starting point for their own discussions of cultural hybridity, identity, and power. There is broad agreement among these scholars that the borderlands are a space of struggle, where people must navigate the boundaries between different identities and the norms associated with them. However, there are also areas of tension and disagreement, particularly with regard to the extent to which the borderlands are a site of oppression or liberation.

Anzaldúa herself does not negate the systems of oppression which have formed the borderlands, however at its core, her understanding is that the contradictions of these in-between spaces create subjects who are uniquely adapt to subverting these oppressive systems (Naples 2010, p. 507). Other scholars have criticized this understanding, stating that it lends itself to an essentializing of the new mestiza consciousness as inherent to those who inhabit the borderlands. They argue that a heightened policing of norms is just as much a characteristic of the borderlands as the subversion of them and that the adherence to prevailing norms is more than anything a matter of survival in this context (Naples 2010, p. 507).

I understand these criticisms and believe that there is certainly an argument to be made for Anzaldúa downplaying the role of institutional and societal power in the borderlands in how it may undermine the development of a subversive new mestiza consciousness. However, I would argue that these factors are present in Anzaldúa´s writing and that her focus on the potential for liberation in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* should be viewed not only through an academic lens, but also through an activist lens. Anzaldúa is writing not only to an academic audience on how to analyze and understand the systems of power and resistance in the borderlands but is also addressing those who inhabit these spaces, as she herself does, directly and calling them to use the consciousness which arises from these positionalities for resistance.

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(Chicana) Border Art

Katrin Sophie Reiß

In "Chicana Artists: Exploring nepantla, el lugar de la frontera," Gloria Anzaldúa writes about the meaning of the border for border art. She calls the border a metaphor "that deals with such themes as identity, border crossings, and hybrid imagery" (Anzaldúa, 1993, p. 40). And it is that metaphor that makes border art relevant in the context of a queer perspective on the U.S.-Mexican border. While Anzaldúa does give a general definition of border art in the article she approaches the subject mainly from a feminist perspective. Thus she focuses on Chicana artists, on women artist. Accordingly this entry will follow Anzaldúa's focus on Chicana artists and border art, even though border art can be viewed more broadly and is not restricted to Chicana artists.

Border art or *el arte de la frontera*, as I understand Anzaldúa, is an attempt to represent the authentic, everyday life of people on the border. On the one hand, it tries to break with the old, to break with traditional, distorted, false representations. But at the same time, it does not break with the connection to its own tradition, rather establishes a kind of connection to its own folk art and cultural background and history. It is a Mexican battle against but at the same time with the U.S. It is an emancipation, a detachment and yet a melting and fusion. In my understanding, border art is the exploration of the contrasts, contradictions and difficulties of the condition of living on the border, crossing the border and the question of identity. The border, as a metaphor not only for the U.S.-Mexican border, but also borders of gender, class, race and sexuality, is put in connection with the *nepantla*. Crossing borders then is not only a physical activity limited to the sites of nation's borders but a mental state of transition and disorientation. The *nepantla* is a Nahuatl word, and Anzaldúa defines it as an in-between state, as a space of disorientation and uncertainty, of deconstructing as well as creating new, a space of transformation. The *nepantla* is "that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another, when changing from one class, race or gender position to another, when traveling from the present identity into a new identity" (Anzaldúa, 1993, p. 39f.). And from that crossing and moving on both sides of border comes what Anzaldúa calls "una mestizada." *Una mestizada* is, as I understand Anzaldúa, that new thing that comes from mixing cultures. But not only mixing them. Anzaldúa describes the artists process as placing themselves in the border, breaking it down and rebuilding something new. It remains neither one nor the other. Instead, something new emerges that carries parts of both, but is not merely supplemented, but created anew. And that *mestizada* is created by border artists in their art.

As stated earlier, Anzaldúa focuses on Chicana artists, when talking about *el arte de la frontera*. And it seems as if she assigns them a specific approach to border art. “For women artists, *nepantla* is a constant state; dislocation is the norm. Chicana artists are engaged in ‘reading’ that *nepantla,* that border” (Anzaldúa, 1993, p. 39). Border art is political art and is community based. The artists of border art are themselves located within the community and labeled as “border” and/or “Chicana” artists. A label that according to Anzaldúa creates expectations and thus pressure. Their task is to represent their community, their *pueblo.* The artist as the storyteller is as relevant as the story being told. “Border *arte* is an art that supersedes the pictorial. It depicts both the soul *del artista* and the soul *del pueblo*. […] I call this form of visual narrative *autohistoria*” (Anzaldúa, 1993, p. 41). “Border” and/or “Chicana” artists not only tell their own story, but include their cultural history in portraying their personal history. They’re influenced by their environment. The artists identity is representative for the collective identity. In *autohistoria* the “I” is the collective identity.

Alma López, *Our Lady*

Alma López’ digital collage “Our Lady” of 1999 is one example of border art. It is reminiscent of classical depictions of the virgin Mary and of la virgen de Guadalupe. And at the same time it has Aztec symbolism in the clothing. I thought that maybe the cloak that Our Lady is wearing is see-through and the Aztec symbolism shines through rather than being printed on the cloak

and that in that way it represents some sort of protection — of standing between Aztec religion and christianity. And that standing in between, not being neither here nor there might also be alluding to the *nepantla*. But then the painting is called *Our* Lady maybe alluding to the culture mix, to the *mestizada* rather than differentiating between two cultures. Rather than portraying two separate cultures López' painting unites different symbols and fragments of both creating a new assemblage, a *mestizada* and thus a new identity category.

The roses on her body and surrounding her might be a reference to the legend of la virgen de Guadalupe offering a rose in deep December to an indigenous person. The interpretation of Our Lady as la virgen de Guadalupe is especially interesting recalling that Anzaldúa writes that "*La gente chicana tiene tres madres*" (Anzaldúa, 1993, p. 38). There, Guadalupe is described as having been used by the Church for institutionalized oppression. In that way, even if the depiction of Our Lady could be interpreted as a *mestizada* the cultural history of oppression and persecution is not obscured but is part of what forms the new identity.

The painting also subverts hegemonic depictions of the devote Christian woman. Though almost naked her posture is confident, even reminiscent of Botticelli's Birth of the Venus. Rather than being ashamed for her nudity the Virgin makes direct eye contact, thus liberating herself from a subordinate role and gender stereotypes. The interpretation of a reference to The Birth of the Venus might be supported by the resemblance between what might be the Virgins halo and a shell. At the same time that halo/shell is also evocative of a vulva's depiction. And in connection with the butterfly/naked torso of a woman underneath her the halo/shell/vulva can be interpreted as a questioning of the assumed heterosexuality of Our Lady. In class there were two interpretations offered of what the butterfly might symbolise. The first was that it might be in reference to "mariposa" the Spanish word for "butterfly" which was/is used especially in Mexico as a derogative term for gay men. That interpretation would go hand in hand with the interpretation of the halo representing a vulva and subverting heteronormative imagery. The other interpretation was that the butterfly is maybe supposed to be the monarch-butterfly that is known for migrating very far and as such representing Mexican immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexican border.

Of course there is much more that can be said about border art in general and also on Chicana artists' border art. I chose Alma López' digital collage "Our Lady" because it fits very well with Anzaldúa's focus on Chicana/women artists. But of course there are many more border artists aside from Chicana/women artists, like for example Julio Salgado. In general I think that *el arte de la frontera* is a distinctive form of art. And i wonder about the dangers that Anzaldúa points out in the text. What about the pressure that lies on the artists, the heavy burden

to represent their *pueblo*? One question that Anzaldua poses, but I cannot answer, I want to give the reader to contemplate: “Is the border artist complicit in the appropriation of her art by the dominant art dealers? And if so, does this constitute a self-imposed imperialism?” (Anzaldúa, 1993, p. 41f.).

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Controlling Borders

The construct of the "European" Tolerance

Sophie Kuhn

"*trophies* of the West" – this is how Francesca Romana Ammaturo calls the LGBTIAQ+ identities which are instrumentalized in the context of the so-called 'Pink Agenda'. This notion describes a set of political and social instruments which gain a promotion of LGBTIAQ+ identities and their tolerance in Europe. Nonetheless the author marks clearly that the 'Pink Agenda' is an "ideological toolkit" (Ammaturo, 2017, p. 57) and has more the purpose of enforcing the dichotomy between European and non-European states than being a real working plan. The process of policing sexuality and nationalizing bodies as identities is a phenomenon which can be analyzed in the dealing with borders as the European or the U.S-Mexico border.

As the first chapter "Entry Denied" by the author Eithne Luibhéid presents, the political and legal specification of people who are capable of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border functions along the notion of the idealized heterosexual nuclear family (Luibhéid, 2002). As the term 'Pink Agenda' illustrates, is the notion of selective migration not necessarily that of the US - rather LGBTIAQ rights are used in a political agenda within (Western) Europe to make a European tolerance seem to exist and equally to distinguish itself (and set a benchmark) on an international level. Clearly both text show arguments for selective immigration and that the underlaying policy is based on stereotypes such as behavior, gestures and facial expressions or the degree of the credibility of stories and intersects with aspects of for example race, gender and religion.

Othering exemplified by the concept of 'European tolerance with LGBTIAQ+ identities

Othering describes a political process which differentiates people into an "us" and "them." However, this differentiation can only function through a demarcation from the apparent other, in which one's own superiority over the allegedly foreign is constituted. The power relation of this process is also fundamental for the alleged tolerance that is supposed to exist within Europe regarding LGBTIAQ+ rights (Ammaturo, 2017, p. 52). On the one hand, the differentiation between the "us" as tolerant and the "other"" as intolerant is equated with what is considered European and non-European. On the other hand, the handling of LGBTIAQ+ rights within Europe is glorified and standardized - ignoring social and political struggles that are ongoing due to homophobic or transphobic orientations of European countries. The concept of tolerance is thus part of the Othering process, in which (Western) Europe reproduce the colonial power

of deciding to judge what can be tolerated and what not. The Pink Agenda's Othering process therefore suggests that while Europe tries to be progressive and liberal externally by discrediting countries interpreted as non-tolerant, the mechanism to control and proceed are not matching with the practiced tolerance. Ammaturo shows that the "[…] heteronormative character of the nation [is reinforced], while simultaneously providing a space of mild tolerance for the others" (Ammaturo, 2017, p. 55). The perpetuation of a heteronormative and patriarchal norm relates well to the seminar theme of the U.S.- Mexico border. As the text "Entry Denied" and the more general discussions in the seminar show, the process of othering is not at all a European one - but rather refers to the reproduction of (colonial) power structures that punish any deviations from this norm.

At this point, I also ask myself what the apparent tolerance, which for example is carried outwards by the 'Pink Agenda' as within the discussion about the U.S.-Mexico border, means in the practical and everyday life of queer people, when there is still a lot of discrimination on a political and societal level. And as I can see, the tolerance for queer people is not enough to get away from the (white dominated) heteropatriarchal norm in Europe or North-America and its discriminating and oppressive consequences. How can tolerance still be a goal, also beyond Europe, when this is not even the bare minimum?

Homonationalism

The instrumentalization of LGBTIAQ+ rights for political purposes and legitimation, among other things, becomes clear in the concept of Homonationalism. Ammaturo illustrates that this mechanism "[…] describe[s] the way in which sexual identities can be mobilized in favour of the interests of nation states and their (neo)liberal agendas" (Ammaturo, 2017, p. 53). The dichotomy between tolerance and intolerance of queer communities is linked to geographical borders and political systems (like liberal democracies) that reproduce colonial and imperial power structures. The example of Russia, as presented by Ammaturo, shows that labeling Russia as transphobic and homophobic reinforces this dichotomy (Ammaturo, 2017, p. 61). Furthermore, it shows that Othering Russia like this is needed to amplify the apparent tolerance within European societies to construct a much less tolerant image in the outside.

Borders

The binary of outside and inside is evident in the examples of 'Pink Agenda' and "Entry Denied." Not only does the Othering process mark the inside and outside (here: Europe and non-Europe or democracies and non-democracies), but it also legitimizes the control of

immigration through borders. While at the U.S.-Mexico Border people have been and are punished for any deviation from the heterosexual norm, the ‘Pink Agenda’ reveals that it is primarily the narrative of white and European LGBTIAQ+ realities that should be tolerated and protected. The dichotomy of tolerance and intolerance or queer-friendly and queer-unfriendly can thus be seen as a continuity of a binary system - which is extended to queer people through the ‘Pink Agenda’, but continues to adhere to a white norm, which also sees itself as European and liberal. Borders are therefore not only existent in its physical materiality but also in the system of thinking in politics as in societies – with the goal to defend a heteropatriarchal, white norm.

The ‘Pink Agenda’ shows me, that the debate about LGBTIAQ+ realities nowadays is used by liberal democracies in Europe and North America as a means for the (re)production of power relations with other states, that follows the (west) European sovereignty of interpretation which can be found in a lot of colonial continuities.

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Drag

Eleanor Brecht

The class presentation on Latina/o/x Drag and the Border: Gender, Borderlands, and Performance highlights the lives of queer identities in the U.S.- Mexico border, following an overarching theme of colonialism that influences border relations, specifically in terms of racism and gender roles/expectations.

Colonial Imaginary vs. Decolonial Imaginary

Before defining the colonial and decolonial imaginary, it is helpful to first discuss the difference between de-colonialism and post-colonialism. Post-colonialism explains how modern-day society was influenced by the effects of European colonialism through the analysis of history, culture, and literature. It primarily describes the lasting effects of colonialism through the escape from European colonialist rule. On the other hand, de-colonialism refers to the separation of modern-day life from Eurocentric hierarchies and criticism of systems derived from them. Put simply, post-colonialism describes the residual effects and influences of colonial rule after it has ended or departed, while de-colonialism stresses the act of tearing down the Eurocentric structures of colonialism that have never left.

Like de-colonialism, the decolonial imaginary works on breaking down the colonial perspective of the strict gendered binary, working as a deconstructive tool through historiographic methodology. Emma Pérez, in her text, creates this concept of the decolonial imaginary, which questions who has and who can produce knowledge, breaking up binaries by disputing what is written in history to reveal the colonial, binary relations inherited from historical ideas in colonial times. While the decolonial imaginary is a liberatory tool meant to de-colonize, the colonial imaginary is an inherently binary concept that seeks to exclude all individuals who do not fit into its narrow binary "box." In El Paso and Juárez, two cities nestled right next to each other yet separated by the U.S.- Mexico border, queer communities reside in a racist, heteronormative colonial space, one which follows the colonial imaginary. For queer communities to navigate out of the colonial space, decolonial practices must be performed in order to survive in a world that actively excludes them.

These definitions help in explaining the reasoning behind certain standpoints on and near the U.S.-Mexico border that are influenced by colonial imaginary ideas of heteronormative gender roles. Beliefs held not only by those who do not accept queerness, but also heteronormative ideas within the queer community. In the discussion of heteronormative ideas

that are still very much prevalent in the queer community, I couldn't help but think about Pepe Porras, one of Pérez's interviewees in the text who "was afraid to engage in penetration for fear he'd wake up feeling like a woman" (Pérez 202). This brings up the topic of performativity based on colonial standpoints of conforming to the gendered expectations set. The concept of someone being the "man" or "woman" in a same-sex relationship based on whether they "give" or "receive" plays into the dichotomy of what a relationship "should" look like within the colonial imaginary, and that each must perform their respective roles in order to be in this relationship. This idea is stressed by Pérez, "In Mexico, if you're the top, then you're the male, hence not gay. But if you're on the receiving end, then you're the gay one. In Juárez, lots of married men have sex with other men" (Pérez 203), this further proving the lingering ideas of colonial imaginary within binary relationships. While the colonial imaginary exists in Mexico, it is also clear from the experiences of the interviewees who have lived in the United States that the colonial imaginary and conforming to gendered expectations within a relationship is still very much a reality, albeit in different ways. Knowing this, the matter of how colonial imaginary conceptions in the United States and Mexico may collide as we approach their border alters the expectations and behaviors of the people who live there.

Drag and Performativity

Unlike the colonial binary idea of performing "active" and "passive" roles that determine gender, drag queens near the border use performativity as a way to exaggerate and express gender that puts into question its definition, in turn practicing decolonial imaginary. Not only do drag queens confront and subvert gender identity, but they also deconstruct brown masculinity and brown femininity through their performances, representing how intersectionality intersects with gender. Latina drag queens are actively participating in the decolonial imaginary to deconstruct the historical ideas left behind in colonial history through their performances that challenge gender norms and certain racialized ideas attached to gender. "Ultimately, Latina drag performances call one to question dominant social norms by demonstrating a range of rescriptings. Within a brown space, Latina drag performers selectively perform the race and gender of their diva. Through their performances, they replace dominant binary understandings with a more fluid intersectionality" (Moreman and Macintosh, 130). In their performances, Latina drag queens challenge the expectations of brown femininity and brown masculinity by reconfiguring what one could associate with brown gender norms into something more malleable, providing a new perspective on how race and gender can be explored.

When discussing the U.S.-Mexico border and de-colonial ideas of dismantling these Eurocentric hierarchies, I believe that Latina drag queens build up a substantial portion of those working to break down ideas of the binary, including those within race, through their performances and ability to engage their audience in questioning hegemonic identity norms.

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Gendercide

Cheyenne Nur Hardt

Gendercide refers to the systematic extermination or elimination of individuals based on their gender, often in the context of war or conflict. To frame the discussion of the notion of gendercide, I have chosen the circumstances of European colonizers' violence against third gender individuals that were subjected to gendercide, referred to in Deborah A. Miranda's "Extermination of the Joyas: Gendercide in Spanish California." This text, on the other hand, draws on Maureen S. Heibert's review of Adam Jones' book *Gendercide and Genocide* to further develop this terminology. Jones and Hilbert define gendercide as a (violent) attack on a group based on the gender/sex of the victims. To be noted is that the perpetrators are the ones who define the threat and analyse which bodies and which specific gender/sex to target for extermination (Miranda 2010: 259). Miranda further develops Heibert's use of the terminology and notes the absence of third gender recognition – as it's based on normative sex/gender ideas - within the Native Indigenous history, but adopts that definition as it supports Miranda's own definition of gendercide: "an act of violence committed against a victim's 'primary gender' identity" (Miranda 2010: 259). The questions that came to mind centered around the notions of sex and gender, which seem to be interchangeable, and also, while I share Miranda's afterthoughts, I rather miss further exploration of the sex/gender analogy and the "primary identity." The term "primary identity" utilized during Jones's analysis intends to mark the exaltation of the gender as the primary reason that leads to the victimization, rather than other factors like ethnic, racial, national, or socioeconomic identity (Heibert 2005). Additionally, he claims that gender can be defined primarily, if not exclusively, in terms of biological sex (Carpenter 2002: 79). The terminological arrangement of primary identity minimizes or does not give the same value to other identities that could be of additional explanatory importance (Heibert 2005). In consideration of the above, I share Miranda's view, that understanding gender in biological terms connotes a further disregard of non-binary experiences, whilst broadening the terminology of "primary identity." Gendercide targets after all groups and individuals who are perceived as deviating from the ideology of the perpetrator. This argument specifically can be drawn from Miranda's text on the gendercide attack on joyas. Miranda refers to texts centered around methods used by the Spaniards to exterminate the joyas (Miranda 2010: 256) to demonstrate, from the perpetrators' perspective, the ideology that gender is a category that preceded the attack: "the killing of a certain gender because of their gender" (Miranda 2010: 259). In particular, I argue that violence emerges entirely from a perpetrator's ideological

intentions, where an interplay of categorical aspects such as race, gender and sexuality are displayed. The after effects of this form of violence is evident in Miranda's analysis, in which Native communities are still experiencing consequences of gendercide to this day: "This tragic pattern in which one segment of indigenous population was sacrificed in hopes that others would survive continues to fester in many contemporary Native communities where people with same-sex orientation are no longer part of cultural legacy but feared, discriminated against, and locked out of tribal and familial homes" (Miranda 2010: 259). I further argue that in specific border contexts and for the purposes of the overarching field in question, these categories intersect in a specific form at the US-Mexico borders and therefore still contain remnants of mechanisms of gendercide. Within the framework of gendercide, specific forms of institutionalized violence become evident, which have historical origins in (settler) colonial past. These, in turn, are entrenched in borders, as they consolidate a physical display of efforts to identify and exclude certain racialized and gendered bodies by means of delegitimization and violence. Argumentatively, this becomes visible in Miranda's approach to understand the mechanisms of gendercide, predominantly in the author's deduction of a comprehensive systematization that pursues annihilation of a specific gender in terms of conscious beliefs: a process of devaluation, of forced (re)gendering (whilst considering race), increased victimization and aggression. To conclude, I want to emphasize the need to include a framework like that of gendercide in relation to settler colonialism and the U.S.-Mexico border in order to further understand ways of systematic aggression against BIPoC gender nonconforming people.

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Jotería

Sophie Marie Schönholzer

The meaning of the term jotería is not fixed. The term derives from the colloquial Spanish language term joto, one of three pejorative terms (the others being puto and maricón) for gay men in Mexico and in Mexican and Chicanx communities in the United States (cf. Alvarez 2019). It is often used to describe people of Mexican descent whose lives include practices of gender and sexuality outside of heteronormativity. Some authors compare jotería with terms (only) regarding sexuality, like lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer. Others argue that historical, geographic, and cultural contexts make jotería differ from these North American terms (cf. Hames-García 2014). Terms like LGBT or queer look at a person's sexuality or gender apart from their other roles in society. In his text "Jotería Studies, or the Political is Personal" Michael Hames-García argues that jotería – if we resist to use it as a synonym for queer or LGBT – enables to talk about how people exist within a larger social fabric. In that sense, a person is viewed in their own complexity; for example, as being a friend, worker, partner, parent and artist at the same time. Sexuality and gender are regarded as being part of and intertwined with this larger social fabric (cf. Hames-García 2014). To quote Hames-García:

> As *jotería*, our bodies and our selves are lived legacies of colonialism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, and heterosexism. By bringing *jotería* studies into existence, we make the claim that these social and political processes cannot be adequately theorized without attending to our personal experiences. (Hames-García 2014, 136)

Hames-García stresses the importance of individuals personal experiences when it comes to theorizing and the political. It is for example important to see that people who are affected by the mentioned legacies of colonialism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and heterosexism make different experiences than white people. Historical and geographical distinctions make specific experiences and cannot be separated from one's sexuality or gender (Hames-García 2014). Queer – as a predominantly white connoted term – ignores culturally specific experiences and its impact on gender and sexuality and can because of that be seen as ignoring coloniality. Jotería on the other hand is considered a decolonial term, which is culturally specific and contemplates and connects individuals' experiences and backgrounds. Jotería is able to articulate what queer studies should incorporate. Some of the texts I read about jotería and jotería studies very much reminded me of the concept on intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw. The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination "intersect" to create unique dynamics and effects (cf. Center for

Intersectional Justice 2023). Of courses the two terms have come to life out of different perspectives, positionalities and needs and in that sense follow specific goals which differ from each other, but I argue that both concepts pursue the basic goal of looking at different aspects of people's identity as a whole and how they are intertwined. In my opinion jotería (studies) in that sense can be considered as having grown out of the demand for intersectionality (in politics and theory) or as being based on an intersectional foundation. I find important to add and criticize that the concept of intersectionality – in some ways similar to the concept of queerness – is very broad and unspecific and therefore not able to actually cover multiple aspects of and differences in identities. I claim that calls for intersectional perspectives would be easier to implement, if there were culturally specific, more precise and less theoretical alternatives to the concept of intersectionality. Jotería can be considered such an alternative. The term jotería raises some questions that have not been answered so far within jotería studies. The first one being – as I have already shown above – to what extent jotería studies remain distinct from other categories of sexual or gender nonconformity. Furthermore, whether jotería is specific to Chicana/o culture or if it can be used by other cultures/ethnics. Does the term for example include broader Latinx culture? Thereupon what speaks in favor of the term being culturally specific – and in that sense sort of exclusive – and what speaks against it? Queer – being more of an umbrella term – may speak to more people at first glance and seem more inclusive. By taking a closer look it becomes clear that the term queer has proximities to hegemonies of whiteness (and coloniality) and is in that sense exclusive in a different way, whilst claiming not to be. With that in mind, it makes a lot more sense to me to create and use more culturally specific terms, which one could consider as being exclusive from their perspective, but at least do not adopt a false neutrality. All of these and more questions are currently being discussed within jotería studies and will have to be discussed further in the future. It is clear that this discussion makes important contributions because it attempts to take into account individuals positioning and is thus able to create a more holistic and complex picture of identities.

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Juárez Femicides

Michaela Neumeister

To begin with, it is important to understand the expression Juárez Femicides itself. One possible way to define Femicide is the killing of a female* person because of her gender and includes inter alia the homicide as part of organized crime and torturing women* as an extreme form of misogyny (United Nations 1).

The reason why I am writing specifically about femicides in Juárez is the tremendous amount of these kind of murders in the past decades in the Mexican border town Ciudad Juárez (Arriola 25). According to the scholar Elvia Arriola this unfortunate development has its origins in the industrialization of the area following the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the US and Mexico (25). A factor that strengthens this claim is that a third of the victims were maquiladora workers. These workers are mostly women who labor for American companies on the Mexican side of the border. The typical employee does not have much formal education and is young. Therefore, they do not have many other options than working in a maquiladora. Due to the low wages which they receive for their work (Arriola 26) they often have to live in dwellings which lack basic facilities such as electricity and water. Although this is definitely a problem, this information does not explain yet why those women are so often victims of femicides.

The most obvious and superficial reason is that the harmed people of crimes that include some kind of sexual abuse are usually young and female in general. However, as these working-class women are disproportionally often affected by femicides, it is necessary to dig deeper. One aspect that should not be underestimated is the ignorance towards the needs concerning the "health, safety and security" (Arriola 27) of these young women by the Mexican government. This means for instance that they are not safe on their way to their workplace as it is likely that some murders are committed by bus drivers who are supposed to pick the women up close to their homes and drop them off at work. Besides, as the companies produce their commodities 24 hours a day a lot of women have to walk to the bus stations in the darkness when not many people are around to witness a possible crime (Arriola 38). Even worse, when a worker is late, they are sent back home as a disciplinary measure and thus have to walk long distances without any kind of protection. This has happened to Claudia Ivette González who was found dead in a state which was "grossly violated" (Arriola 55). On top of all these direct dangers, the ignorance and victim blaming of politicians, like the governor of Chihuahua who

considers the worker herself responsible for the crimes because of her style of clothing, perpetuates the general hostility against maquiladora workers. As a result, people are less interested in solving the murders and preventing further deeds. Consequently, there are no thorough police investigations which leads to the encouragement of perpetrators to continue their crimes and emboldens potential offenders to vent their misogynist fury on maquiladora workers.

There is a novel about the topic of the Juárez Femicides called *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* which was written by Alicia Gaspar de Alba. To me, the book facilitates the understanding of the helplessness of family members of victims who often only know that their loved one is missing (Gaspar de Alba 239). On top of that, it illustrates the emotional state of emergency of the protagonist Ivan whose sister Irene has disappeared. They look for Irene's body in the desert in the hope to attain clarity about what has happened to her. As the academic text I was writing about in the first paragraphs already mentions, nobody feels responsible to solve the Juárez femicides so Irene's family walks through the desert on their own to find her body (Gaspar de Alba 238). This scene is exemplary of the accuracy of the portrayal of the murders by de Alba. Nevertheless, I feel ambiguous about the story as the question whether it is ethically appropriate to publish a book about crimes must not be ignored. Apart from the possibility of retraumatizing the families of victims by providing graphic details of their loved one's agonies one could argue that it is immoral to generate profit with the sensational representation of crimes especially as the book's genre is classified as murder mystery. To me, it is hard to find a clear answer as the counterarguments, for instance the increased awareness for the Juárez Femicides due to *Desert Blood* and that works of fiction can lead to more sympathy for the victim and compassion for the grieving families than non-fiction books, are equally valid.

As scholars and writers have attracted attention to the Juárez Femicides in the past years, it is now important that the government acts in the form of the improvement of the working conditions of maquiladoras and taking responsibility for their health.

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Muxe and Two-Spirit

Rodrigo Meneses

The concept of third-gender identities has been very present in Non-Western Indigenous communities since pre-colonial times. These identities are a form of non-binary gender representation and tolerance in these societies: “Two-Spirits are likewise commonly referenced as examples of transgender acceptance in non-Western and Indigenous communities” (Chisholm, 2018: 23). One of the terms used to describe third-gendered people is Two-Spirit. It would be introduced recently in defiance of the colonial term *berdache,* in the US/Canada territories. It’s used as an umbrella term for any non-binary gender indigenous Non-Western community, therefore being a very broad term, that includes every specific identity into one transnational “term”. This concept includes every person who identifies as a “third-gender”, possessing both cis-genders simultaneously and not necessarily about sexuality: “Two-Spirit is generally about gender roles and expression, not who you fall in love with” (Driskill in Chisholm, 2018. 24). Two-Spirit had the history of having a more spiritual and religious representative aspect to it, in some cases. I find It could be wrong to say that someone truly identifies themselves as “Two-Spirit” and not simply represents the opposite gender, in certain ritual cases. Although, someone who identifies as “Two-Spirit”, is someone who is able to flow between the two cis-genders seamlessly, in any case. It depends on the culture, this is why it’s such a broad “term”. The scale of it can be understood by the struggles it possesses. It’s a double oppression on an international scale, of racism and queerphobia, from within and outside their communities. These types of oppression have been implemented by white settlers, who had a more patriarchal and bi-gendered view. One that has prolonged and affected the indigenous communities from within, by forcing said morals on them. *Muxe* is a local term used in the Zapotec community, in Mexico, for third-gendered people. But I understand that it’s similar to “Two-Spirit”, or at least falls within it . There is a specificity when it comes to Muxe, since they have an important role in society, like in some other indigenous communities. Therefore, it is important to understand what also separates them and gives uniqueness. Muxes are male-bodied people, portraying female roles, but they are not both at the same time, they are something different, just like “Two-Spirit”. It’s shown in the Olita (2018) video, a Muxe explaining this identity: “women are women, men are men and Muxe are Muxe.”.This means that they present qualities from both cis-genders, whilst not being either. That’s why they have an important role in their society, that is viewed with respect and value, due to this duality of genders they possess. Taking roles of women, without actually becoming one, whilst being

male-bodied, but not acting like one. Although I might have to point out, scholars also mention that some Muxe define themselves as women. This is visible when, in the text (Chisholm, 2018: 27), there is a mention of a scholar, who refers to a Muxe with the pronoun "her", instead of "they" like in most cases. To me, being a Muxe is a more specific "Two-Spirit", because it's more than a role or gender, it's a lifestyle that integrates every aspect of their life into an act, putting on a performance of a lifetime, literally. This is something that is obvious, when they say, in the video (Olita, 2018) that they want to have a normal life, with families and female gender specific jobs. But again "Two-Spirit" is a very broad term and in some way includes Muxe in it, despite the specificity. This connection is visible, through the oppression the Muxe suffer, it's on a smaller scale coming from within their communities and families normally, despite what was said above, about their role in the community. This stems from the same patriarchal and binary views of white settlers that affect "Two-Spirit". A third-gender, looks like a perfect metaphor for the US-Mexico border. If we take these Two-Spirited people as an example of border communities, they're between two sides, like a border. Yet, they're not one or the other, they're something else that lives amongst them, a "third-community". When I think about that duality of the Two-Spirit and how they seamlessly travel between both genders, for example. I think about the way people from around the border are able to move through it, coming and going, but not settling on one, specifically. These identities have served to explain how non-western communities view a third gender, something that contradicts the binary, just like the "borderlands" (Anzaldúa, 2012) have been created out of the US-Mexico border binary. By creating this concept of someone who is between two sides, but being connected to both, either through body or through mind, I see a definite connection.

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Queer

Nicolas Dreyer

The term queer is inherently difficult to summarize. First utilized as a derogatory term, the word queer was reclaimed by gay and lesbian activist groups in the 1980s-1990s and has been in use ever since. As such, the supposed meaning of this term heavily depends upon the historical, political and social context in which it is uttered. Queer challenges traditional, usually binary understandings of sexuality and gender by situating itself in between these categories and not strictly adhering to either one. David Eng, Jack Halberstam and José Muñoz (2005) therefore described it as a term that disputes and questions said norms and aims to include additional personal and social factors besides gender and sexuality (Weise 484). Uniquely, due to the ambiguous definition of queer it can describe diversions from both sexual as well as gender norms like same-sex relationships or even BDSM practices simultaneously, whereas other terms such as gay, lesbian or transsexual lack such versatility (Weise 485). The term queer not only refers to a personal identity that does not align with a heteronormative binary however, but it is also used in academic contexts to describe the (re-)examination of social and cultural subjects through the lens of gender studies, or more generally from a nonnormative point of view.

Heteronormative traditions are deeply rooted in Western beliefs and especially in Christianity. Michel Foucault (1978) proposed, that the norms Western society adheres to today were formed by written and spoken discourse concerned with sexuality, which itself was influenced by Catholicism as a whole. According to him, deviating from the norm, or what would nowadays be known as queerness, became a device of evaluating the influence of such systems of power on the social acceptability of different identities within said discourse (Weise 486). Furthermore, Foucault theorized that the widespread persecution of non-heteronormative identities present in many European countries stemmed from the Christian practice of confession as well (Weise 485-6).

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) on the other hand uses the term to liken a queer experience to tangible, material borders via the idea of borderlands, specifically the area marking the U.S.-Mexican border. She utilized narratives and poetry on a more individual level to describe the similarities of borders between different countries and borders of the heteronormative sexual and gender binary (Weise 487), once again referring back to the notion that the term queer, just like people who live on the border, exists in an in-between space. In *Borderlands/La Frontera,* Anzaldúa describes the borderlands of Mexico and the US as a space of ambivalence and

ambiguity constituted by artificial boundaries (Anzaldúa 25), which in itself sounds remarkably similar to how the boundaries of a heteronormative gender binary create the negative space between the male and female categories, from which queer identities emerge. The aforementioned sense of uncertainty is due to the fact that the culture and the people of the borderlands struggle with their own identities, as they do not belong to either of the adjacent cultures, and thus create their own border culture (Anzaldúa 100-1). Anzaldúa explains, that this emerging culture is perceived as undesirable by the adjacent, more dominant ones, describing its people as "prohibited and forbidden" (Anzaldúa 25). Again, the similarities to sexual and gender identity politics are obvious. Queer identities also must create their own categories apart from male and female because they do not belong to either one under a heteronormative understanding of gender identity. In addition to this, queer people have also always been facing discrimination and scrutinization by the more accepted identities of modern, heteronormative society. She proposes the concept of a *new mestiza,* blending cultures together and creating a new understanding of identity, one which not only considers the ones in-between the existing categories, but also allows for a combination of various identities into one. This proposition is antithetical to the prevalent notion of White superiority in a Western colonial society (Anzaldúa 100-1). Similarly to the *new mestiza,* queer gender identities also reject the idea of a dominant, prevailing category and encompass 'rigid' categories, such as transgender identities, flexible categories, like genderfluid or bigender identities, as well as ones that outright reject a gender binary, such as agender identities. Therefore, Gloria Anzaldúa's use of queer is an evaluation of White, Eurocentric colonial values that still persist to this day in addition to a critical assessment of these principles (Weise 487).

Apart from critiquing heteronormative sexual and gender norms, the term queer is capable of evaluating many more social factors. Hollibaugh and Moraga (1981) for example used the term within a feminist context to point to the fact that various subsets of equally marginalized women were excluded from the teachings of second-wave feminism, which focused more on white, middle-class women, and advocated for a more inclusive approach to the matter. Here, queer is used to illustrate and highlight the way various social factors, such as race or class, interact to create a multitude of different experiences (Weise 486).

The term queer is by definition hard to explain. It encompasses a wide variety of identities and experiences that are excluded from a modern, heteronormative, binary understanding of society and as such cannot be defined in its entirety, rather it must have some ambiguity within its meaning in order to function as it does (Weise 488). Queer is a very versatile term that rejects fixed categories and is used to challenge normative structures, which

is exemplified by the many scholars from various disciplines that have been able to utilize the term to critique a multitude of different issues. Gloria Anzaldúa's works specifically managed to excellently highlight the ambiguity and indeterminate nature of queer via its use in her descriptions and depictions of life in the borderlands. However, due to the variety of its possible applications and implications, queer is a very difficult term to grasp in my opinion. There is a huge amount of weight and meaning behind the term, which can make understanding and using it correctly and adequately a demanding task. Nevertheless, the utility, inclusive properties and especially importance of the term queer for the discourse around gender identity politics and sexuality in general can and must not be understated.

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Trans

Chandler Smith

Crossing the border from Mexico into the US can already a violent and precarious process for any racialized migrant. When crossing the US-Mexico border trans-migrants, however, face additional discrimination, bigotry, and potentially criminalization specifically on the level of their transgender identity, that otherwise cis people do not experience.

To enter the US as an asylum seeker, trans-migrants are often forced to "prove" their transgender identity to border agents or in immigration courts, which typically is narrativized along very white, heteronormative, and Eurocentric standards of what "transgender" people should look like and what their lives should sound like. Usually, this assumes a very binary transition within a dual-gender system – leaving no space for non-binary or other gender-diverse migrants to be seen as 'trans'. This system also assumes that trans-people want to migrate to the US on a basis of some kind of violence inflicted on them because of their gender identity, thus linking transness in third-world spaces to a pre-determined level of suffering or violence. These narratives that center "suffering" as a trans person to "escape" to a more 'accepting' US, quickly become a double bind. Legibility of violence against trans-people, little to no access to police records of violence against trans-people, and even this preconditioned mandate to have "prove" violence against you for the purpose of migration create complex barriers to trans-migrants seeking asylum the US.

More recently in 2018, Trump's so-called "Migrant Protection Protocols" or rather, the "Remain in Mexico Program" forced asylum seekers to stay in Mexico until their immigration cases are heard (American Immigration Council). This policy also forced more trans-migrants into situations of violence by secluding them into camps along the border, where rates of violence against trans people are exponentially high. Gendered-designated lines to access food, bathrooms, or other supplies generate spaces where trans-migrants are also more likely to experience transphobia or transmisogyny and likely forgo necessities crucial to their livelihood like daily meals and access to toilets – just to not have to face ongoing transphobia from other migrants.

When trans-migrants are finally able to enter the US and establish asylum or residency, narratives of having to be "model citizens" also haunt trans-migrant realities. Trans-people in the US, especially trans women, face extraordinarily higher levels of violence and murder. Furthermore, employment and medical discrimination, domestic assault, designated gender markers on IDs, and even alienation within one's own community can create strain on trans-

people's survivability. Despite these major gaps in access to needed sources and community, on top of US-level prejudices against trans-people, trans-migrants are expected to squeeze their entire realities into very narrowly-defined, very conservative modes of being. These modalities typically, if not always, align to reproduce heterocis-sexism. Working a stable job, getting married to the "opposite gender", having children, and normative household structures become unannounced but sanctioned ideals for trans-migrants to aspire to in order to stay in the US.

Within the LGBTQ community itself in the US, trans-migrants still face discrimination on the levels of racism and xenophobia. Mainstream and liberal LGBTQ-activist groups in the US have historically centered issues like same-sex marriage equality; this primary focus on gay and lesbian marriage and similar issues as the pinnacle of the "gay rights movement" reflects violent breaches of heteronormativity, whiteness, privileged citizenship status within mainstream LGBTQ activism itself and works to invisibilize necessary issues like migration, documentation status, and border policies – all of which are essential within the flight for trans-migrants' liberation. More so, brown, undocumented trans-migrants and activists are treated with little or no regard, disrespected, and even ostracized for highlighting important issues central to their survival (Galarte 1).

In his book *Brown Trans Figurations,* Francisco J. Galarte describes a scene in which a prominent, undocumented trans activists, Jennicet Gutiérrez, was and hushed by, not only other LGBTQ community members and "activists", but by Obama himself at an LGBTQ-rights reception in the White House. During the reception, Gutiérrez delayed Obama's speech by speaking up and calling for much-needed protections for undocumented trans-migrants and call out the suffering of trans-people in ICE detention centers (Galarte 1-2). After being hushed and brushed off by the president and booed by other so-called LBGTQ activists during the reception, Gutiérrez's direct action called into question whether or not mainstream US LGBTQ politics was also the space to fight for the liberation of migrant trans-people.

Galarte uses this initial scene of Gutiérrez being hushed and silenced as a jump-off point to theorize "brown, trans figurations," in which he considers how "brownness" and "transness" escalate the "narrative demands" of brown, trans-subjects – narrative demands meaning the pressure put on brown, trans-people by society to narrate their lives in a certain way and along a certain, consumable story-line (Galarte 14-15). Galarte states that these narrative demands render brown trans lives as "inconceivable, stuck, deceptive, nonexistent, unnatural, and most importantly impossible" (Galarte 13). By pointing to this stuckness, however, Galarte seeks to break and deconstruct these archetypal stories around brown, trans people and help seek "relief" from being stuck in narrow, representational "roles" (Galarte 14).

Optimistically, theorizing brown, trans figurations may actually provide respite from and even agency outside of the demanding nature of a racist, transphobic and xenophobic society to squeeze brown, trans-migrants seeking asylum in the US into pre-determined and heterocis-normative forms. And in place of those restrictive paradigms, offer possibility towards "emergent, differentiating, self-representing, contradictory social subjectivities" when narrativizing brown, trans life (Galarte 14).

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