

“MEMORY IS ALL THAT MATTERS;” QUEER LATINX TEMPORALITY AND
THE MEMORY-MAKING PROCESS

BY

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DEDICATION

Para mi familia.

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ABSTRACT

My paper explores the incommensurability between chrononormativity and queer Latinx experience. The “seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines” which comprise the conventional markers of adulthood – college, career, marriage, children, death – anticipate a linear progress through life, but are constitutively inapplicable to both queer and Latinx identities in contemporary society (Freeman 3). In contrast to a chrononormative account of subjectivity, I posit and theorize memory as the more appropriate temporality for queer Latinx subjectivity, precisely because memory itself is a disruption of chrononormativity’s presupposition of linearity or progress. For, as Elizabeth Freeman states, “Queer temporalities... are points of resistance to this temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others: that is, of living historically” (xxii). Dwelling in the possibility of those queer temporalities is the work of memory. I explore memory’s importance in the works of Gloria Anzaldúa and Daisy Hernandez (respectively, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed: a memoir*), and in doing so, posit an approach to reading queer Latinx narratives which escapes the temporality of linear progression and makes room for the intersecting axes of queer and Latinx identities.

INTRODUCTION

“No soy de aqui, ni de alla”, sings Facundo Cabral, an Argentinian singer. A lyric often repeated by scholars, actors, immigrants, and Latinx peoples who see themselves in the liminal sentiment of belonging neither here nor there (Cardona). This liminal space of displacement and in-betweenness is a place where many queer Latinx writers reside. The author, located in the present, writing of the past, speaking to a future reader, allows for that same lack of localization that cultural displacement precipitates. As queer Latinx authors find themselves outside or constantly negotiating space, that space is itself outside of linear temporality. Thus, methodologies that presuppose linearity, or progress as chrononormativity would have it, are inherently incommensurable with the experiences related by the respective authors. My paper will explore this incommensurability between chrononormativity and queer Latinx experience. The “seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines” which comprise the conventional markers of adulthood – college, career, marriage, children, death – anticipate a linear progress through life, but are constitutively inapplicable to both queer and Latinx identities in contemporary society (Freeman 3). Despite the fact that this notion of linearity and progress does not necessarily encompass all people, queer or not, nevertheless Freeman’s application of chrononormativity and its absence from queer lives is the lens by which this thesis hopes to analyze memoirs written by both queer and Latinx authors. As such, in contrast to a chrononormative account of subjectivity, I posit and theorize memory as the more appropriate temporality for queer Latinx subjectivity, precisely because memory itself is a disruption of chrononormativity’s presupposition of linearity or progress. For, as Elizabeth Freeman states, “Queer temporalities... are points

of resistance to this temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others: that is, of living historically” (xxii). Dwelling in the possibility of those queer temporalities is the work of memory. I will explore memory’s importance in the works of Gloria Anzaldúa and Daisy Hernandez (respectively, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed: a Memoir*), and in doing so, posit an approach to reading queer Latinx narratives which escapes the temporality of linear progression and makes room for the intersecting axes of queer and Latinx identities.

Due to various political, cultural, and economic tensions endemic to our times that disrupt the chrononormative rhythms that denote progress - be it the Great Recession of 2008, the student debt crisis, the militarization of customs and immigrations, global warming, a pandemic - these rhythms that establish some sort of linearity no longer constitute or reflect the realities of those living through our contemporary moment. Despite the long history of displacement and oppression faced by those within the Latinx and queer communities, the more universal sentiment of time’s instability, or lack of true linearity as it’s been conceived of before, necessitates a new understanding of what time looks like without the typical markers that signify its passing. Previous notions of teleological narratives, be it the American Dream or the rhetoric of pulling yourself up by the bootstraps, all inevitably fail in numerous ways to encompass what it means to be queer and Latinx in this moment, and it’s in that incommensurability with lived experience that the authors discussed here find a new way to live in their respective moment.

Although the goal here is not to somehow supersede the conventions of narrative structure, nevertheless, examining how those structures are read gives insight into the larger concepts being engaged. Because linearity is incommensurable with the lived experiences of the queer Latinx memoirists being discussed here, one way to understand how that incommensurability plays out at the textual level is to examine the structure of the memoirs themselves and how they work to portray the experiences being related. Due to the forward motion of reading, from page one to page two and so on, the presupposition of linearity that it implies does not reflect the experiences shown within the narrative. Although this could be said of all memoirs – for memoir is a genre that allows for novel experimentation with time and narrative – it is important to note that the queer Latinx authors being analyzed in this thesis redefine what it means to read temporally due to the fact that their engagement with time diverges from notions of normative progress, and as such, rupture those conventional notions of time. Freeman’s definition of chrononormativity conceptualizes it as a form of “living historically,” which is, again, incommensurable with the authors’ experiences because there is no ability to live historically in the first place. Living historically, normative and linear as it is, does not account for the lives of those who live neither normative nor linear lives. That being said, we can turn to some theorizations of time and narrative to get a broad understanding of the way temporality plays out on the page. If, according to Ricouer’s delineation of successive time as Aristotle defines it, time is perceived through successive moments or instances, the inability to place the moments related by the respective authors in a linear timeline disrupts the methodologies that, again, presuppose a linear engagement with time. Aristotle’s definition of the instant – “For what is bounded by the ‘now’ is thought

to be time – we may assume this.’ For it is indeed the ‘now,’ the instant, that is the end of the before and the beginning of the after. And it is the interval between the two instants that is measurable and countable” (Ricouer 19) – does not account for perspectives, however. Ricouer problematizes this definition of time as successive instances, however my point here is one that is contingent on the subjective experience of writing. The instant which the author experiences the act of writing the memoir is one that constitutes the now, and yet the words themselves also refer to different instances that, according to a successive notion of time, were experienced in a past ‘now.’ This paradox of the lack of linearity, then, forces a new conceptualization of time that engages with that displaced temporality, or at least takes for granted the lack of linearity. Ricouer’s engagement with time and narrative is one that could be said to encompass all memoir because the genre allows for temporal play, and in understanding how the genre helps facilitate that temporal play, it also helps set up how queer Latinx memoirs diverge from the genre – not by virtue of genre difference, but more so how the lived experiences (memories) of the authors themselves are a sort of temporal disruption that cannot only be accounted for via genre conventions.

It is in questioning the paradox of the lack of linearity where we look to memory. Memory as it develops in queer Latinx narratives is, again, a suspended temporality that cannot exist within conventional notions of past, present, or future. David Roman’s definition of time in relation to performance is one that is especially apt in bridging the gap between time and memory as it appears in queer Latinx narratives, although here he specifically refers to dance and theater: “I here understand the contemporary as a critical temporality that engages the past without being held captive to it and that instantiates the

present without defining a future. Performance proves an especially effective means to engage the contemporary in that artists and audiences are constituted and composed as a provisional collective in a particular temporal moment and in a specific localized space” (Roman 1). The way performance works in the context of the memoir, then, presupposes that the singular moment of creation is specifically temporalized and spatialized, but it could just as well be said that the act of reading reproduces that same performance in a separate temporalization and spatialization. The reader as audience constitutes a subject within that performance as it plays out across the page, and the fact of that continuation, or rupture, of time as it operates in the moment, forces a conception of temporality that undermines linearity. The memoir, as a genre, is one which fundamentally deals with the past and yet the reproduction of that past in a present moment ruptures the linearity that could otherwise be seen in a narrative structure of beginning, middle, end.

By employing Ricouer’s understanding of the way time fluctuates depending on perspective, the notion that temporal displacement due to a sort of spatial displacement takes place through the act of reading is given form. As he states in the second volume of *Time and Narrative*:

... the notion of the world of the text requires us to ‘open up’ the literary work to an ‘outside’ that it projects before itself and offers to critical appropriation by a reader. This notion of an opening does not contradict that of closure implied by the formal principle of configuration. A work can be at one and the same time closed upon itself with respect to its structure and open onto a world, like a ‘window’ that cuts out a fleeting perspective of a landscape beyond. This opening consists in the pro-

position of a world capable of being inhabited. And in this regard, an inhospitable world, such as that many modern works project, is so only within the same problematic of an inhabitable space. What I am calling here the fictive experience of time is the temporal aspect of this virtual experience of being-in-the-world proposed by the text (100).

Because this experience of “being-in-the-world” is one that is fundamentally subjective depending on place and perspective of the reader, the inhabitation of the world is one that is further suspended in (or out) of time. The reader is a constitutive part of the book’s performance – referring again to Roman’s definition of contemporary performance – and as such, must be considered within the scope of temporal placement. With that being said, while it is important to establish the reader’s positionality in relation to the larger performance at play, nevertheless it is the authors’ experiences which are the central production. While I do maintain that the readers’ presence as subjective audience is one facet to understanding the sort of temporal disruptions occurring at the textual level, the readers’ presence is still in relation to the writer and the memory itself.

Although, again, the argument here is not necessarily that physics somehow suspends itself in the process of narrativizing the lived experiences of queer Latinx authors, temporality as it appears in their memoirs is one that reflects that self-same experience. As Américo Paredes states after many years of ethnographic study of the culture thriving at the border of Mexico and the United States of America, “Memory is all that matters” (Saldivar 11). His study of the ballads, literature, and mythology, partially resulting from imperialism, displacement, and settlement of the borderlands led to this revelation of memory’s importance in the larger production of culture, and is relevant

here due to its insight into the way that lived experience is reproduced, or performed, within the pages of memoir. Memory's importance within the lives and literature of the displaced, is one that can be tracked throughout the literature of Latinx people within and without the border, tied together by impositions of hegemonic forces outside the culture. Displacement due to outside forces, however, is not the only motivating factor in establishing a literature where the pervading motif of memory being all that matters takes root. Queer Latinx writers, beyond the displacement caused by the forces of imperialism and white supremacy, contend with the heteronormativity within the culture that rejects gayness as having a place within the community. The sense of in-betweenness or suspension produced both by cultural displacement within and without the culture is reflected in the suspended temporality of memoir as a medium.

Laura Hyun Yi Kang's book, *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women*, gives good insight into the way cultural displacement – or its performance – operates on the level of narrative and memoir. Although she is focused on the experiences of Asian American woman, and what that title connotes, nevertheless the definitional engagement with incommensurability and the experience of people displaced in both space and time is highly relevant to the arguments being made here. She states, “Although it is a key genre in literary classification, autobiography can also be disciplinarily muddying, comprising an uneven mixture of novel, diary, journalistic reportage, native testimony, familial genealogy, political statement, and oral history. Even Georges Gusdorf, one of its early renowned theorists, must resort to an extradisciplinary metaphorical reach in arguing that ‘the appearance of autobiography implies a new spiritual revolution: the artist and model coincide; the historian tackles

himself as object” (Kang 33). In Kang’s analysis of Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, especially the reception of her story as both an autobiography and a seeming testament to the experience of every “ethnic American, woman, immigrant, the Chinese people, all Asian Americans, Chinese women, Chinese Americans, Asian American women” by what she calls “metonymic extension” (31), the incongruence of ethnic subjectivity in the eyes of a white hegemony makes itself known. In analyzing memoirs, or autobiographies, there is always the risk between universalizing a subjective experience, and making a monolith out of otherwise individual stories. On the same note, however, trivializing the similarities amongst experiences of authors sharing a same culture can also run the risk of repeating a rhetoric of exceptionalism that counters any work that can be done within specific fields of inquiry. As such, my interest in the way memory works within the narratives of queer Latinx writers walks this thin line with especial attention to the folly of either/or.

While describing a set of photographs included in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictee* through the lens of Walter Benjamin’s ruminations on how art and its “liberation from its originary context”, Kang comments, “[Benjamin’s] description of mobility in exile, of loss and shattering in the midst of reactivation and renewal strikingly resonates with the contours of immigrant experience. *Dictee* reactivates the photographic images of Korean history in an ‘American’ context, while acknowledging their incommensurability with the moment and place of their original production as image” (232). The narratives analyzed here are not necessarily immigrant – although the experiences in the diaspora, whether first, second, or even third generation immigrants, fit nicely within the scope of immigrancy when displacement is the central lens by which to reflect on the experiences

of queer Latinx writers – and as such, work to salvage the aforementioned walk across the tight rope of monolith or exceptionality. The divorcing of the art from its production gives further context to the concept of subjectivity as it relates to a writer and reader’s role within the performance of the memoir. Running the risk of abusing Roman’s definition of contemporary performance, it is again the localization of a performance into a specific space and place that necessitates the widening of perspective as it relates to narrative. The incommensurability of the moment from its origination does not detract from the words written as much as it forces the sort of temporal displacement that constitutes the core of this thesis. Just as any kind of chrononormative perspective of time is incommensurable with the queer Latinx experience, Kang allows for that incommensurability to reflect itself on to the art itself.

In order to further contextualize queerness itself as a rupture in linear time, we look to Jose Esteban Munoz’s *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. One of the central theses of Munoz’s book is the assertion that queerness is an ever-present horizon. I use ever-present with purpose, for the constant hope for a queerness on the horizon is based in the utopian ideal of possibility. As he states, “Queerness is not yet here... Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now’s totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*” (Munoz 1). Although Munoz’s book focuses fundamentally on the way futurity should redefine the antirelational or pessimistic views of queerness that he argues suffuse queer studies, the future, here, is not antithetical to my own understanding of displaced temporalities as they occur in queer Latinx narratives. *Cruising Utopia* offers a

new methodology that centers hope in the conversation of queerness as it is performed in different modes and mediums. This methodology is one that is fundamentally concerned with the temporal, and despite the temporal placement of the future as it could appear in any conversation regarding futurity, nevertheless Munoz allows for the understanding that, “In a similar fashion I think of queerness as a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity” (16). Although, again, the way time is referred to here is one where notions of past, present, and future are specifically cemented in instances that are easily defined – different from my understanding that temporality’s subjectivity displaces those conventional conceptions of readily defined, and linear, time – the idea that all of these temporalities are in conversation with one another resonates well with a temporal imaginary that exists beyond linearity or progressivity.

In order to pave the path which will lead us to the narratives of Anzaldúa and Hernandez, I turn again to Freeman’s original comments on the way queer time rejects the linearity which I too am rejecting in my readings –

Reading closely means fixating on that which resists any easy translation into present-tense terms, any ‘progressive’ program for the turning of art into a cultural/historical magic bullet or toxin. To close read is to linger, to dally, to take pleasure in tarrying, and to hold out that these activities can allow us to look both hard and askance at the norm. But in the works I have gathered here, close reading is a way into history, not a way out of it, and itself a form of historiography and historical analysis. These artists see any sign as an amalgam of the incommensurate: of dominant uses in the

present, of obsolete meanings sensible only as a kind of radiation from the past, of new potential, and, more simply, of different points in time as meanings accrue and are shed (Freeman xvii).

Paredes's insightful commentary into the reality of the Chicanx peoples' experiences and cultural production on the border, of memory being the only thing that matters in the larger scheme of things, is exactly where we will tarry alongside Freeman. "I have been making a case for a hermeneutics of residue that looks to understand the wake of performance," writes Munoz. "What is left? What remains? Ephemera remain. They are absent and they are present, disrupting a predictable metaphysics of presence" (71). This thesis is meant to continue the work Munoz, and all the other scholars I touch on in this introduction and into my closer readings of queer Latinx memoirs, a work which takes up the mantle of a hermeneutics that rejects heterosexist, cisnormative, chrononormative, white readings of these memoirs which divorce the experience of queerness and Latinx-ness just as soon as the experiences are related. It is a way of reading that lingers in a present, while the past and the future make their own mark on the act. Displacing time, here, is a love letter to the performance of the moment and the importance of the memory.

GLORIA ANZALDÚA'S BORDERLANDS/LA FRONTERA: THE NEW MESTIZA

In the preface to *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa states, "This book, then, speaks of my existence. My preoccupations with the inner life of the Self, and with the struggle of that Self amidst adversity and violation; with the confluence of primordial images; with the unique positionings consciousness takes at these confluent streams; and with my almost instinctive urge to communicate, to speak, to write about life on the borders, life in the shadows" (21). The confluent streams of which she speaks of, quite literally, fall into the conceptualizations of temporal linearity discussed in the introduction of this thesis. Her existence is one rooted in the present moment of writing. Her preoccupations with primordial images are ones that are specifically rooted in the past. Her urges to communicate are with the understanding that the reader will internalize all that she is saying in a future moment. The confluence of that which is spoken, preoccupies, and urges all work to create a very specific localized space that foregoes any normative structure of time. In this sense, and despite the fact she is speaking specifically of *la frontera* in this quote, "*Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'" (25), it could also be said that the artifact of the book itself is where the transgressive occurs and lives. Purposefully, time as it exists here is not normal.

Although Anzaldúa's text is in fact a treatise, and a paradigm-shifting meditation of the realities of being a queer Chicana living on the border, nevertheless the glimpses of the personal as they inform the cultural constitutes enough of an insight into the lived experiences of those who share the same or similar identity markers, that calling

Borderlands/La Frontera a memoir does not feel disingenuous. Anzaldúa, as both Chicana and lesbian, reformulates what it means to be both, or neither, through her coinage of the new mestiza. As an identity born of those markers, and simultaneously outside of them, the same sort of temporal displacement necessitated by the memoir as a form takes place within her book. By employing different modes within the text that work towards autobiographizing her own experiences while expanding them to encompass a new methodology, paradigm, or identity, *Borderlands/La Frontera* perfectly embodies that concept of the temporally displaced – constantly negotiating or disrupting notions of the past, present, and future. As she states, “I am a border woman. I grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory). I have been straddling that *tejas*-Mexican border, and others, all my life. It’s not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions” (21).

The underlying tension of cultural and personal memory, here, is something that Anzaldúa takes up throughout her treatise on the new mestiza. Despite the seeming contradictions found within identifying Chicanx – or more broadly, Latinx – and queer, which underpins much of the importance of memory and the way it serves both as disruption of the conventional and as a reformulation of larger cultural memories in service to personal experiences, Anzaldúa’s conceptualization of the new mestiza is a synthesis of both identities. As she states in the passage that opens the second chapter of her book, “Ya no solo paso toda mi vida botando las costumbres y los valores de mi cultura que me traicionan. También recojo las costumbres que por el tiempo se han probado y las costumbres de respeto a las mujeres” (37). To this end, we look to Muñoz’s

notion of performing queerness and its relation to disidentification: “Thus, to perform queerness is to constantly disidentify, to constantly find oneself thriving on sites where meaning does not properly ‘line up.’ This is equally true of hybridity, another modality where meaning or identification do not properly line up. The postcolonial hybrid is a subject whose identity practices are structured around an ambivalent relationship to the signs of empire and the signs of the ‘native,’ a subject who occupies a space between the West and the rest” (Munoz 78). The notion of hybridity is especially apt here, especially when analyzing Anzaldúa’s own understandings of her place as a bridge. In one of her earliest poetic descriptions of her experiences as a new mestiza, Anzaldúa writes, “*Yo soy un puente tendido / del mundo gabacho al del mojado, / lo pasado me estira pa’ ‘tras / y lo presente pa’ ‘delante...*” (25). Disidentification, here, is not totally removed from the concept of hybridization. In being a bridge between the outsider and the one enmeshed in the culture, Anzaldúa is creating a new space which disidentifies with the conventional ideas of what the binary looks like, while hybridizing it in a way that allows for parts of that conventionality to also hold true in a new identity. Anzaldúa is both Chicana and lesbian, two identities which in separate narratives could not coexist, and yet in Anzaldúa’s formulation of self as a new mestiza, she manages to create a hybrid notion of identity that inherently calls into question conventional modes of being.

Deborah Paredez’s *Selenidad* also calls into question normative structures of being Latinx, or queer, or both, in her analyses of Selena Quintanilla’s mourning and remembrance after the Tejana’s death in 1995. By analyzing the way performance and reproduction of Selena as an icon for young and queer Latinx performers, Paredez delves

into what it means to form a community in the aftermath of a tragedy. Echoing Joseph Roach's understanding of surrogation, she states,

Selena Forever operated as a surrogational field for the convergence of claims and contestations over latinidad. The process of surrogation, what Joseph Roach defines as 'the enactment of cultural memory by substitution,' is a common practice through which a community remembers and reproduces itself. This memorial process is invariably fraught with struggles of the community's past, present, and future. According to Roach, 'The principle of surrogation clearly operates [when]... a powerful sense of affiliation pervades the community on the occasion of its most consequential single loss.' Within this place of affiliation, 'there also exists an invisible network of allegiances, interests, and resistances that constitutes the imagined community... a breeding ground of anxieties and uncertainties about what the community should be.' Spaces of surrogation thus cut across ideological and temporal divides, offering an illuminating view of the processes by which communities re-member themselves through the act of mourning one of their fallen members (Paredes 99).

Although Paredes does problematize the more monolithizing aspects of latinidad as a concept – especially in her reading Selenidad as a distinctly queer phenomenon – nevertheless, it does bear mentioning that the problematics of a monolithic latinidad lies in the displacement of the Latinx peoples which are excluded from any form of hegemony. Despite the marginalization of queer people within the larger structure of a

unified Latinx community, the work of people such as Anzaldúa – and Hernandez– all work to expand what it means to be conventionally Latinx, while calling into question exactly what it means to be conventional at all. Anzaldúa’s interweaving of indigenous cosmologies and lesbian lived experience into the larger structure of the new *mestiza* operates on the same level of the concept of *Selenidad* as Paredez defines it. The ontological imperative to define a community therefore either necessitates a break from temporal convention – or progress-oriented narratives – or risk reinforcing the sort of chrononormative orthodoxy that in essence excludes those who do not fit conventional notions of selfhood.

Paredez invokes Anzaldúa in her definition of *Selenidad*, stating, “...remembering Selena serves as a means of bridging what are frequently divided Latina/o community and familial lines and of engaging in the queer Latina/o cultural practice of ‘making *familia* from scratch’... Moreover *Selenidad* serves as a catalyst for theorizing the *nepantla*, or middle, space or borderlands of memory – indebted, of course, to Chicana feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Pat Mora, who have written evocatively about these concepts” (179). Memoir as a performance, as I posit in this thesis, grabs hold of this notion of the inherent liminality of both the queer Latinx experience, and the act of writing itself. Multiple times throughout *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa plays with this liminality in a way that draws attention to the performance she is enacting. For example, we look to Anzaldúa’s lament for legitimacy at the linguistic level. She states, “Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write

bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate” (81). The assumption, here, is that the notion of legitimacy follows the same sort of linear temporality meant to be exploded by Anzaldúa’s book, and yet, the fact that the lament for her language is written not as something that has occurred, but something yet to come. It is no coincidence that the irony of the yet-to-come is written in a book which often does not translate, and integrates Anzaldúa’s legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and other languages into the narrative itself, negating the idea that it has not occurred. Anzaldúa has manifested the legitimacy as she writes it, once again disrupting the sort of linear temporality that her lament presupposes.

In keeping with the way performance both allows for a kind of temporal localization that disrupts linearity – due to that selfsame localization – we look again to Munoz. While analyzing – quite beautifully – the transgressive and non-normative performances of Kevin Aviance in the New York drag and ballroom scenes, Munoz states, “In Marcia Siegel’s influential book of dance criticism, *At the Vanishing Point: A Critic Looks at Dance*, Siegel provocatively links dance to the notion of a vanishing point: dance exists as a perpetual vanishing point. At the moment of creation it is gone.... Siegel certainly knows that every vanishing point signals a return, the promise of the next performance, of continuation.... Queer dance, after the live act, does not just expire. The ephemeral does not equal unmateriality. It is more nearly about another understanding of what matters. It matters to get lost in dance or to use dance to get lost: lost from the evidentiary logic of heterosexuality” (81). Again, while describing the transgressiveness

– both in terms of heterosexuality and white supremacy in gay culture – of Kevin Aviance’s drag performances, Munoz states, “The hermeneutics of residue on which I have called are calibrated to read Aviance’s gestures and know these moves as vast storehouses of queer history and futurity. We also must understand that after the gesture expires, its materiality has transformed into ephemera that are utterly necessary” (81). This notion of performance as both history and futurity while existing in the present all relate to Anzaldúa’s own formulations of spirituality, and the process of writing it into being in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. As she states, “That power is my inner self, the entity that is the sum total of all my reincarnations, the godwoman in me I call *Antigua, mi Diosa*, the divine within, *Coatlicue-Cihuacoatl-Tlazolteotl-Tonantzin-Coatlalopeuh-Guadalupe*- they are one....Something pulsates in my body, a luminous thin thing that grows thicker every day. Its presence never leaves me. I am never alone. That which abides: my vigilance, my thousand sleepless serpent eyes blinking in the night, forever open. And I am not afraid” (73). In every iteration of goddess or cosmological being that Anzaldúa gives name to in her synthesis of them all, the sort of temporal disruption that Aviance’s ephemerality also embodies is given form. In being these cosmological entities that span cultures, times, and spaces, Anzaldúa’s assertion that she too is the serpent goddess stretches beyond the temporal and spatial while never cutting ties with those same times and places. Although one of Anzaldúa’s overarching theses - the border crossed us - is a specifically placed one, nevertheless, the temporal imaginary that Anzaldúa’s reconstituted personal and cultural memories play with is still as readily present, if not situated. Anzaldúa's ethnographic engagement with the Aztec cosmology tethers the history of the land and native peoples of the U.S.-Mexico border to the present

being written into being by Anzaldúa's hand. Just the same, that present moment of creation is one that is also imagining a new future in the conceptualization of the new mestiza. The idea of "new," here, being a fundamentally future oriented ontology, where the temporal engagement with past and present cosmologies, traditions, and artistic renderings are all neatly tied into a future enmeshing of all those concepts.

To finish this analyses of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* through the lens of memory and temporality, I look to Anzaldúa herself - "So don't give me your tenets and your laws. Don't give me your lukewarm gods. What I want is an accounting with all three cultures – white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – *una cultura mestiza* – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture" (44). The house which is built out of Anzaldúa's writing is one that brings together the markings of all times at once in the conceptualization of the new mestiza. As the history brought to bear at the border is given new definition in Anzaldúa's careful carving of the way culture has developed in *la frontera*, the different influences of Aztec spirituality in the form of Anzaldúa's *Antigua/Coatlicue/etc.*, contemporary decolonization efforts in the form of reinscribing Guadalupe with antipatriarchal ideas, and the future-oriented feminist formation of culture in the new mestiza, all culminate in the sort of genre performance which displaces all normative conceptions of temporality. As Anzaldúa envisions a queer, Chicana space where the shortcomings found in spaces that ignore one in favor of the other do not reside, that space finds itself in her book.

DAISY HERNANDEZ'S A CUP OF WATER UNDER MY BED

Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, although highly interested in integrating the author's personal experiences as a lesbian Chicana with the broader aim of a treatise on the new mestiza at large, nevertheless tends to skirt the more formulaic notions of what a memoir holds in terms of the author's remembrances. That is not to say that *Borderlands/La Frontera* is not the perfect entryway into the way form, memory, and time all intersect – be it under the umbrella of memoir or not – within the artifact of a book, however, narrowing the focus further into the analysis of books which are memory-laden without the more universalizing approach of Anzaldúa's paradigm-shifting treatise allows for a narrower understanding of memory's role within temporal disruption. Daisy Hernandez's *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*, although not as interested in the sorts of methodological formulations that Anzaldúa creates within her work, nevertheless allows insight into memory in a way that resides at the exact juncture where queer and Latinx intersect.

Although much of this thesis has been dedicated to the way memoir allows for the sorts of temporal disruptions talked about thus far, it is worth noting that the underlying experiences being related by the respective authors are themselves the driving force between the nonnormative relationship to time as a construct. It could be said that the sort of temporal displacement occurring in the queer Latinx memoirs here, could also be found in memoirs written by those who are neither queer nor Latinx – which is, quite frankly, an interesting concept for another paper focuses foremost on genre – however, the argument here stems directly from the disruption occurring at the core of being Latinx and queer simultaneously. The lived experiences of the authors discussed here, Anzaldúa

previously, and Hernandez from this point forward, are very specifically placed within the spheres of hegemonic forces at play within those identities. Freeman's conceptualization of chrononormativity is the basis for the specificity of experience by queer Latinx authors as their lives are written down, for without the linearity imposed by those "biorhythms" of progress-oriented temporalities, queer Latinx authors must then exist in new modes of the temporal imaginary. It is doubtless that many memoirists play with the concept of time in a narrative sense, largely because the forms of a memoir allows for it, however, the argument here is that it is not the genre itself which creates the temporal disruptions in queer Latinx memoirs, it is the fact of being both queer and Latinx at once. Daisy Hernandez touches on this when she states, "I miss the conversations now. More than anything, I long for the days when I came home to report that Julio had given me flowers or promised to take me to Wildwood. We have, my family and me, including my father (who demanded to know if Julio was gay the whole time), settled into a region called 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.' And it is hard, I imagine, for people who have not experienced this to understand the weight of that silence and how the absence of language can feel like a death" (86).

When defining queer time, J. Halberstam, "Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience – namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (15). Hernandez's description of the quiet of intolerance as a sort of death, fits nicely into the sort of temporal disruption occurring within that experience of don't ask, don't tell as it plays out within the book. When forced to confront which normative structures of time allow for the existence of the

self, the answer consistently comes back to that notion of incommensurability. There is no space to be made within those linear constructs of time, and so, there must be a way to exist outside of it. Here, again, we see the importance of memory. Even in the death that Hernandez speaks of in regards to her family's imposition of don't ask, don't tell, she has spoken both herself and her memory into being. Halberstam's delineation of reproduction time, or family time, or any of the chrononormative temporal modalities which are antithetical to queer time, are also here antithetical to Hernandez's identity as both a bisexual woman and a Cuban Colombian woman. One does not allow for the other in these moments of silence or intolerance, and so she grabs the memory and positions herself within it as an active performer. It might not be the conversation she misses with her parents and aunts, but it nevertheless exists as a moment within she is indubitably present.

The question of language and its symbolic power within both the pages of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Borderlands/La Frontera* is another location of specific spatial and temporal location. Returning to Kang's definition of incommensurability and the way that it operates both within and without the respective cultures which one lives in, she states,

Along with this rejection of assimilation, there is also an acknowledgment of the impossibility of an easy and immediate return to an untransformed Korean past with its mother tongue. After years of living abroad, the emigrant returns to Korea only to be met with suspicious queries and persistent reminders of her estrangement: "They ask you identity. They comment upon your ability and inability to speak. Whether you are telling

the truth or not about your nationality. They say you look other than you say. As if you didn't know who you were" (57). There is yet another painful breach between this returning emigrant and the local natives. Later, when the narrator declares, "I speak in another tongue no, a second tongue, a foreign tongue" (80), she must transcribe this admission in the 'foreign' English, which doubly inscribes the displacement of the 'first' tongue. The coercive intimacies of language and identity are exacerbated by transnational migrations and resettlements, disrupting the fantasy of cultural identity as geographically circumscribable and inextricably affiliated with one corresponding tongue (Kang 222).

The way Anzaldúa and Hernandez incorporate Spanish into their texts operates on two levels in relation to Kang's analysis of linguistic displacement. On one hand, it reinscribes Spanish with the sort of legitimacy afforded to English, placing it at the same level of symbolic power (Bourdieu 502), while simultaneously allowing for a new version of linguistic exchange that does not seem to concede any ground to hegemonic forces or normative notions of proper language. Neither Anzaldúa nor Hernandez offer any translations, and only rarely clarify what is being said in Spanish through the context of the English surrounding it. This all works toward a broader understanding of the emotions behind "ni de aqui, ni de alla" – or, perhaps, "si de aqui y si de alla." Just as Hernandez finds meanings in the silenced conversations, or empowerment in the little sections where she includes moments like, "It's terrible," she says, and then: 'Sientate, sientate. I made you *bunuelos* just the way you like. Are you hungry?' (85), there is the

continued notion of being neither here nor there, but instead in a disrupted temporality that itself allows for both here and there.

In the final paragraph of his chapter, “Performing Disidentity,” Munoz states, “Disidentification’s use-value is only accessible through the transformative politics that it enables subjects and groups to imagine... The cultural productions and performances I have considered in this book amplify and often explicate these everyday practices. They offer a metanarrative on disidentification that at once further atomizes and further transmits these practices... My desire is to perpetuate disidentification and offer it as not only a hermeneutic but also a possibility for freedom” (179). The particularity of temporal space that Roman speaks of in his definition of contemporary performance, coupled with the notion of disidentification performance as Munoz defines it, comes together in Hernandez’s struggle through *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* to reconcile being Colombian, Cuban, a person of color, and bisexual in a way that the artifact of the book perfectly encapsulates. In the recurring moment of writing, where the different temporal moments of past, present, and the situated reader in the future, all come together in a way that allows for Hernandez to position herself as that selfsame being reconciling all her identities into a legible whole. The incommensurability of her identities at a distance is no issue, for just as the moment occurs, the memories within which she resides has established her as perfectly present. Nonnormative, a temporal disruption, but there nonetheless.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

In regards to the notion of genre as opposed to, or in conversation with, lived experience, the concept of “ni de aqui, ni de alla” is especially important in understanding the disruption of temporal location when speaking about queer Latinx memoirs. Even if only engaging with the way language operates at a textual level, the immersion of Spanish into both Anzaldúa and Hernandez’s texts gives the sense of the sort of displacement which is being talked about. Although there is room for this sort of temporal analysis to pertain to other intersections of identities that are incommensurable when seen at a distance, the fact of Latinx spatial and temporal precarity in the United States offers a narrower view into those temporal disruptions. Both in Anzaldúa’s text and the hybrid culture she proposes in the new *mestiza*, and Hernandez’s continuous negotiation of her and her family’s relationship to their mother countries displaces both the authors and the text themselves from any form of neatly situated temporal location.

Américo Paredes’s ethnographic study of the culture at the United States and Mexico border shows the perseverance of a specific type of ballad across space – and in writing it down, time – which factors neatly into the notion of the enduring ephemera of performance as it’s seen in the memoirs discussed. *With His Pistol in His Hand* gives a broad overview of the sorts of variations found in the ballad of Gregorio Cortes, an almost mythic hero in the culture of the borderlands. Despite the variations, however, a cohesive narrative is still found throughout the ballads, and gives rise to its own form of cultural memory based in an art from which is performed. In this same vein, it is obvious from the text that Hernandez has read Anzaldúa and integrated her own understanding of selfhood along the same lines that Anzaldúa first writes, which gives the sense of a larger

tradition of cultural performance being written into existence at the very moment of creation. Ironically, it is here that I think of Halberstam's definition of generational inheritance within the scope of the normative family time – "The time of inheritance refers to an overview of generational time within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next. It also connects the family to the historical past of the nation, and glances ahead to connect the family to the future of both familial and national stability" (Halberstam 19). In true observance of the sort of nonnormativity inherent in the identities which, in part, make up Anzaldúa and Hernandez, the sort of inheritance here is not one of capitalist wealth, or rigid social hierarchies, it is instead the passing of cultural memory from one to the other in the effort of ensuring a sense of community for those who would otherwise not find any, either within or without their singular identity markers.

To close, I think it prudent to include a quote Daisy Hernandez writes into the earliest chapters of her book. The quote by author Minal Hajratwala states, "Perhaps only we of the next generation – raised among strangers, eating the fruits of our parents' risks – can taste the true proportions of bitter to sweet" (8). Although Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the new mestiza does not necessarily fall under the purview of immigrant status, nevertheless the notion of knowing the truth of two sides persists. Both Hernandez and Anzaldúa occupy a space which necessitates the sort of nonnormative modalities, be they temporal, spatial, what have you, to envision the sort of realities and memories they inhabit. This thesis was meant as a form of recognition of that liminal existence, and the commonalities found at intersections.

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