

TRACING WRITER/READER IDENTITY IN, AND IN RESPONSE TO, QUEER  
LATINX AUTOHISTORIA-TEORÌA

By

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## ABSTRACT

### TRACING WRITER/READER IDENTITY IN, AND IN RESPONSE TO, QUEER LATINX AUTOHISTORIA-TEORÍA

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This project examines how diverse representation changes the discourse around queer latinx identities. This project extends theories of representation that show how a text changes the imaginary of the reader through a two-part methodology. First, through explicating *Spit & Passion* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*, this project examines how these texts construct a readers' imaginary. Then, through a corresponding qualitative assessment on readers' responses to the texts, this project identifies the extent to which the texts change the beliefs and understandings of a small group of students. Articulating an ecology of identity using the texts under examination, this project offers a representational analysis of the ways Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández exhibit their queer latinx identities and the forms of resistance they use to survive the constraints of their particular cultural, historical, spiritual, material, political and personal spheres. Further, the representational analysis looks at how Road and Hernández follow in the path laid out by other latinx and queer theorists and engage in Anzaldúa's "autohistoria-teoría." Additionally, using a mixed-methods qualitative assessment, this project follows the shift that occurs in readers' identity forming and ideological perspectives once they have read the two texts. Most importantly, this qualitative assessment demonstrates that Cristy C. Road's *Spit & Passion* and Daisy Hernández's *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*

impact readers' understanding of their own identities, their understanding of the identities portrayed in the texts, and their worldview.

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## PREFACE

Maybe they always existed... maybe the stories... experiences... the truths I scoured for were always there. I certainly struggled to find them. It's wild to think back on how desperate I was as a child — searching for some semblance of self in the stacks, aisles and mountains of pages, sometimes finding bread crumbs to lead me, other times finding nothing.

Growing up the notion of *ni de aquí, ni de allá* was palpable. From the years of being homeless as child running from my abusive father, to being the “only” queer kid in my grade school/ middle school/ high school, to the only brown kid in my university classrooms, to knowing what Christopher Columbus did to my ancestors, to feeling the Trail of Tears in my bones, to not fitting within the bounds of wo/man... This poor, Xicanx, Choctaw, Two-Spirit, genderqueer body/mind/space is complicated.

The first time I read Cherrie Moraga's *Giving Up the Ghost* (1986) I cried. It was my freshman year of college at a white institution on the opposite end of the my home state. Not many brown, queer kids come to play behind the Redwood Curtain. Leaving Los Angeles, an area where the population is approximately half Latinx, to live in Humboldt County, where only 10% of its population is Latinx, left me in shock and feeling starkly alone. Reading *Giving Up the Ghost*. The words, imagery, the sets and language, the romance and the ache... The experience was taking my first actualized breaths... I could see not only myself but my tías, hermanxs and mí familia...

I could see my mother and my sister... The barrio I grew up in. I could see myself. I was 18 and, for the first time, I felt like I maybe had a place to exist.

Now, don't get me wrong. I am one of the lucky ones. I had unconventional role models who survived the impossible. An auntie with tatted knuckles and a pierced eyebrow with a hug stronger than gravity. And my brother... My mother. My grandmother. Stories upon stories of resilience, knowledge, and survival. The catch in each of these stories was never finding someone quite like me in a place beyond my family. According to history books, grade school lessons and every chapter book I have ever read, we didn't exist and if we did, we would never survive. The 1 acre of land that housed 5 generations of my family and the barrio my community built around it was off limits to everyone, even the police. We existed in the untouchable land.

"La Pachuca," the prologue begins as most plays do, with the stage directions. From the very first lines, "the urban, Southwest, a Chicano barrio within the sprawling Los Angeles Basin" (Moraga 6) I knew I was home. The characters' features, clothing, style, intuition. Everything came from my bones. For the first time in all 18 years of my life, I didn't have to translate or look up the references, I could sing the tunes and hear my family singing along on a Saturday morning. Reading them, reading us, was a reminder that despite all of the institutional violence, targeting, and marginalizing... We are still here.

As a kid like me... There are two truths... Two stories which constitute the framework from which you conceptualize the world. The one your family lives and teaches you, and the one school does. Existing in the complicated and messy ecology of

my identity meant having to negotiate both of these, and my own. I learned early on the stories I was taught in school were... askew. My family came to this country through the bracero program. We labored for this country. We fought for this country. We believed in this country. Yet, we also hid ourselves for this country's 'truth.' The light skin, light eyes passing privileges some of us possessed were valued and our mother tongue was not only shamed, but criminalized for the sake of this country's 'truth.' The other half of my family is from Oklahoma. We are proud Chocktaw people. Much of our history, our legacy was lost in the great travel. You can find traces of our stories , our hirstories on the trail made of tears. We were forced from our homelands for the sake of this country's 'truth.' Our homelands, our ancestors' land, was stolen from us for the sake of this country's 'truth.' These were the stories I heard and knew well entering grade school.

As an enthusiastic child, education is a wonderous endeavor. Suddenly you have at your fingertips power/knowledge<sup>1</sup> that gives you the capacity to shift perspective, change the world, and understand yourself. However, as you move forward beyond learning letters, numbers, and colors, the politics of education start to take shape. Suddenly, you are no longer able to embark on a joyous adventure. Rather, you are having to choose between the world your family comes from and raised you in, and the world that holds the most power.

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<sup>1</sup> Power/Knowledge-Social theorist Michel Foucault suggests that power circulates through the dissemination of specific knowledges, through discursive power structures (Leitch et. al 1473).

What does it mean to hold multiple truths in a world where only one of them possesses power? The United States Education Industrial Complex<sup>2</sup> forces the indoctrination of its participants and strips any complexities from truth. As a result, many of us go our entire lives having to navigate ‘knowledge’ that has no room for us or our families. Being something other than White in Amerika means having to choose between the ‘truths.’ Amerika doesn’t leave room for anything else. From “English Only” school policies to the pedagogical practices of English as a Second Language programs, the US Education Industrial Complex insures its superiority. When talking about her experience as a ESL student Daisy Hernández writes “If white people do not get rid of you, it is because they intend to get all of you. They will keep you if they can have your mouth, your dreams, your intentions... In school they call it ESL. English as a second language” (13).

The Education Industrial Complex turns many of its participants into willing contributors to its ‘truth.’ It works to get every piece of your non-whiteness, and bleach it. Using the appeal of power/knowledge, school helps naturalize the idea of exploitation that underlies every institutional structure in the country. For those of us who are non-white participants, we become targets for bleaching and victims to the institution. Further, we become lost and confused in what began as a dreamlike venture into

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<sup>2</sup> Education industrial Complex is a term coined by Anthony Piccano in 1994 to explain the budding network and alliances being formed to promote technology and related services within the American K-12 system. In present day it refers to the for-profit capitalist industrialization model being applied to the American Education system.

power/knowledge but has turned into el cucuy persiguiéndote en tu vida despierta. Y también estás solo sin las palabras para pedir ayuda.

The academy works endlessly to institutionally isolate, undermine, and exclude you. Suddenly, simply engaging in academic work becomes a very important, life-altering choice. Do you assimilate to become an appropriate and accepted member of whatever discipline you choose? Or do you craft your own space to demand room for yourself, your community, and your hirstory<sup>3</sup>? This project is my product of this negotiation and my search for the tools and resources to survive this constant battle. While the education industrial complex institutionalized assimilation, there has always been resistance. This project was my way of finding some of those resisters and highlighting the tools they used so that maybe, some day, a beautiful young brown queer kid can find their way home or even, never get lost in the first place.

When coming to writing... The type of writing which provides a sense of identity, the type of writing that crafts the complex, ever-fluctuating nexus of power relations constituting community is the only one I could attempt to engage with. My project works to examine the ways literature can influence, or even save a life. In her contribution to the collection *Imaniman* the poet ire'ne lara silva notes

I only heard Toni Morrison: Write what you seek and have not found. I only heard Leslie Marmon Silko: Write and heal the world. I only heard Juan Rulfo: Write

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<sup>3</sup> hir- gender neutral/inclusive pronoun used to deviant and challenge the patriarchal assumptions made in "history."

language until it is fire burning the border between living and dying. I only heard  
Gloria Anzaldúa: Transform or die. (18)

Here, Silva is talking about the desperate move writing became for her. She talked about writing as a form of self-discovery and resistance. Particularly though, I want to highlight the ways Silva is talking about the craft of writing as also the craft of making her own identity. The project that follows works to excavate, in detail, the ways two queer latinx authors use their craft of writing to craft themselves, their communities, and our futures in their memoirs. Further, the project takes up the writing perspective of composition, and examines how the texts “enact[s] and create[s] identities and ideologies” (Scott 48). As such, this project attempts to trace the effects of Cristy C. Road’s and Daisy Hernández’s memoirs on their readers. I chose literature whose authors engaged with writing as a tool for enacting identity while also being conscious of the power of representation. Both Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández play with (in form and praxis) the power that comes with their craft. While I intentionally center and focus on the communities [within which] I occupy, all at once, all the time... I chose to participate in several disciplinary practices to appropriately demonstrate my (and my communities’) academic mastery.

Demonstrating my membership in the academy, taking on the identity and position of authority attached to mastery, meant making it my own. For this reason, my writing is simultaneously engaging in the appropriate disciplinary expectations and practices y rompiendo las reglas. Yo soy la creadora de mi propio mundo. También, my family, the stories they taught me, and our experiences gave me the bearings and knowledge to keep going. These perspectives of inquiry, the ways in which i choose to (or not) embody my

many academic disciplines are a reflection of what pushed me towards academic survival.

I came to this research of queer latinx Narratives because of my positionality. When I was growing up, I sought out queer literature as a means of survival. I did so similarly as a young Latinx person, and still frequently look for myself regarding being gender non-binary. However, I often found myself positioned to choose one or the other. I was enticed into essentializing my race, gender, and sexuality performances. Most importantly though, I was taught that identity for any non-dominant group could be reduced down to a few culturally specific, one-dimensional troupes based on stereotypes. As an adult and graduate student, I noticed an upsurge in publishing of Queer Literature and also more diverse representations in them. Thus, my questions arose. In becoming a ‘scholar’ I had to find answers to questions I’ve been asking my entire life. My research questions were simply articulated using the theories and disciplinary practices of my degrees, but the inquiry comes from a deep place in mi corazón. Also, in occupying an academic discipline, like English, which often makes little room for my own complex identities, I looked to my places of comfort to explore my scholarship skills. Additionally, as I developed my understanding of creative writing studies, and particularly the ways in which authors enact and create space for their identities and ideologies that allow for their existence, I couldn’t help but make the connection between my childhood experiences and some of the authors I chose to research. Therefore, I knew there was a connection between who was creating the Literature and how it was being read. I figured, if I was finding solace and comfort in the pages of diverse authors (June

Jordan, Alice Walker, Deborah Miranda, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, Audre Lorde, etc.) and coming to understand myself and the world around me through their words, others must be too. I just had to find proof. This notion paired with my experiences teaching Composition & Rhetoric led me to my project. Since I have always occupied la frontera/the borderlands my research interests were shaped as such. I couldn't just examine one point of investigation, I had to always ask the other question and examine from multiple, complex, intersecting positions.

*Mientras yo no estoy ni de aquí, ni de allá... Soy yo.*



## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

In searching for a project to call my own, I wandered to the places of most intellectual comfort. I wanted to explore identity, representation, and institutions of power. I wanted to explore the way diversity is powerful and important. I wanted to talk about how we can use institutions of power to resist domination. I wanted to complicate the way we engage with literature, writing, and knowledge/power. Most importantly though, I wanted to do it all in such a manner as to make room for and show off los atravesados como yo.

A friend in my cohort thought to give me a couple texts that might explore/demonstrate some of what I was interested in. She gave me *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit and Passion*. Both written by queer brown authors with a complex engagement with identity, representation, and institutions of power, however they were two completely different approaches to the exploration. One, a graphic memoir adopting the zine aesthetic of 90s punk rock and the other a memoir composed in beautiful and poetic short story prose, these authors held me. Seeing aspects of myself, the negotiations of privilege and power the authors take reader through, their adoption of women of color feminism's "Theory in The Flesh," and the contemporaneous nature of each text... My project was begging to be written. In both of these texts, I found the authors crafting a space for identities like my own. Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández

were writing from the undefined place, but with the knowledge and understanding given to them through their experiences, *theory in the flesh*. What stood out, most importantly though, was the ways in which both texts existed independently. While they included experiences and stories many queer latinx folks know, their stories were theirs alone. My intention behind choosing these two texts was random and happenstance. I wanted to be sure to avoid essentializing or tokenizing the experiences of Road, Hernández, and my own communities. It was for this reason, their well-developed and articulated unique identity ecologies that helped me find my project.

### Definitions

This project uses definitions of **culture, cultural identity, and cultural studies** in the same use as Chris Barker and Emma Jane in *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. As such this project sees **culture** as political and contingent and stresses the intersection of power and meaning. As for **cultural identity**, it can be understood as a description of self with which we identify. It relations to several point of cultural meaning like that of race, gender, class, ethnicity, nation and age.

In the practice of creative writing studies, this project frequently refers to **craft**. The discipline uses this encompassing term to hone in on the labor and energy put into writing and to highlight the need for practice, intention, and development when it comes to writing. Similarly, the term **critical** is used in this project to highlight action and a call for reflection. In *Critical Creative Writing* it is described as carrying multiple meanings, but is “characterized by analysis and crucial for the participants in a diverse literary community” (Adsit 7).

The last two pieces of definition help to ground the cultural perspective this project occupies. First, this project takes the term **queer** from la gran filósofa, Gloria Anzaldúa. In *To(o) Queer the Writer- Loca, escritora y chicana*, Gloria uses the terms as a meaning-making process that happens in reading and writing. “Identity formation is a component in reading and writing whether through empathy and identification or through disidentification” (Keating 2009, 171). Here, Gloria is framing **queer** as dynamic, engaged, and as a particular social/theoretical experience rather than an umbrella term for “every”body or as an exclusionary identity. The final grounding definition is for **Latinx**. This term is a contemporary, political, cultural identifier used in place of the gender binary formed Latina/o. The *x* aims to signify the variety included in the gender spectrum moving beyond a gender binary.

#### Finding Spit, Passion, and Cups of Water Para Los Muertos

Done in the fashion of a dingy 90s zine<sup>4</sup>, the story of twelve year old Cristy’s journey to survival as a queer Cubana Catholic growing up in conservative Florida touches on the power of finding community, solitude, and self despite all the ways you clash with society. Framed as a diary, Road uses the privileges granted to the genre of graphic novels and pushes the bounds of graphic novels by adopting the feminist practice of zines. As such, Road is able to craft the inner negotiation of 12 year old Cristy who is

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<sup>4</sup> Riot Grrl Zine- Grrrl zines represent a continuation of this long tradition of feminist alternative and grassroots publishing. When in 1991 the riot grrrl movement emerged out of the alternative and punk music scene in the United States, thousands of young women began to produce personal and political zines with explicitly feminist themes ([grrlzines.net/about.htm](http://grrlzines.net/about.htm)).

grappling with how to hold onto her family, her religious practices, her culture, and her sexual identity. Framed using Cristy's favorite punk rock band Green Day's lyrics and song titles for chapter titles, the pages of *Spit and Passion* become a battleground for the intertextual relationship between the likes of Green Day, 90s punk rock, queer teenage lust, angst, Catholicism, the American Dream, MTV, and class wars. What is most powerful though, is Cristy's unique capacity to reimagine the weapons of conformity (heteronormativity, La Virgen De La Caridad, and being in the closet) as places of resistance. Whether it be the remnants of her childhood imagination or her desperate need to survive, Cristy crafts tools of survival from the very daggers locking her in. She teaches readers to find solace and sanctity in the closet.

Despite being classified as a memoir, Daisy Hernández's *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* explodes the confines of the genre. Telling her story through the storytelling of her mother, tias, tios, and primos alike, Hernández takes readers into the depths of negotiating her in-between reality. As a queer Cuban-Colombian American exploration of how to come to being while holding onto where you come from, *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* allows readers to conceptualizes the connections between migration, loss, colonization, neo-liberalism, familia, y cariño. Discussing every issue from what classifies as "feminism" in America to the punishment for being queer in a Cuban-Colombian family into even the struggles of being a poor kid with a credit card, Hernández is able to explore large and complex institutions through short, poetic prose. In all, *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* take readers into the experiences of Hernández's

family, their inner demons, their joy, their coping mechanisms, and works to imagine a brown and queer present and future that holds space for each of their stories.

Both Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández have their successes. Spanning from “cult status” to famed tarot deck artist, Road has a diverse plethora of work and fandom and has published zines, an illustrated novel, a postcard book, and a lovestory in addition to her memoir *Spit and Passion*. Hernández’s work has appeared in several of the big-name feminist journalism hubs, being the former editor of *Colorlines*, working at the *New York Times*, publishing in *Ms.*, *CultureStrike*, *In These Times*, and on NPR’s *All Things Considered*. Her work covers a diversity of topics and successes.

Road and Hernández take up very different genres in their storytelling and they have different lived experiences. However, they both found ways to employ their craft of writing as a form of identity and ideological crafting. They use their texts to write themselves and their communities into life. With such rich symbolism and distinct theoretical framework being applied to their craft, it was shocking to find limited literary criticism. It seems to be a result of their constant work to break the bounds of conformity in identity and in their craft. As such, often academic disciplines refrain from defining the two writers. However, in the past three years, scholars in English, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Multicultural Studies have begun to recognize the value in Road and Hernández’s craft.

Despite having achieved “cult status,” Cristy C. Road’s work and the unique form in which she publishes creates a barrier for traditional academic engagement. In fact, *Spit and Passion* is included in a collection examining multiethnic graphic novels’ portrayal

and critical revision of U.S. history under the specific understanding that scant scholarly attention has been paid to the work. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials and Marth J. Cutter's *Redrawing the Historical Past: History, Memory, and Multiethnic Graphic Novels* spends one of their chapters examining how Road uses her "autographic" novel as a "historical salvage project" (217). Angela Laflen's chapter, "Punking the 1990s," highlights the ways in which Road uses the genre of the autographic to critically engage with dominant narratives surrounding gender, culture, race, and class by allowing the reader inside the mind of 12 year old Cristy.

The other secondary source that examines *Spit and Passion*, the collection *Unbecoming Cuban-American: An Analysis of Cristy Road's Graphic Narratives*, takes up interest with Cristy C. Road's entire collection of graphic novels. In their efforts to dismantle cultural paradigms, Irune Del Rio Gabiola's "Resistant Bodies in the Cultural Productions of Transnational Hispanic Caribbean Women: Reimagining Queer Identity" spends a chapter highlighting how the punk rock, rebellious, destructive attitude of "unbecoming" that Road applies is actually "a productive set of practices that challenge" heteronormativity, conventional constructions of national identity, and even queerness itself (Gabiola 66). Both examinations frame *Spit and Passion* as an intentional, calculated project and Cristy C. Road uses destruction, unbecoming, and the multiple contradictions present in resisting systems of power and domination. I.E. both academic engagements with *Spit and Passion* understand that "you can take us out of the punk environment, but you can't take the punk rock out of us" ("Green Day"), and Cristy C Road's work may be academically stimulating and calculated, but it's still punk.

For both *Spit & Passion* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*, the most impactful and aspect relates to the practice of radical women of color feminisms in their writing. In the highly influential *This Bridge Called My Back*, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga explain “...a theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives- our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longing- all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (19). Both Road and Hernández write from their *theory in the flesh* giving their readers the chance to understand the contradictions in their experiences, their communities, and the ways they learned to survive. While initially, the notion of *theory in the flesh* was customary only of feminist theory circles, the value of experience as knowledge has spread to become a common pedagogical value of political and academic circles alike.

#### Literature Review

A central issue in literary, cultural, and creative writing studies is the lack of diversity of representation (both in creators and characters) in literature. While novels like Angie Thomas’ *The Hate U Give* (2017) are storming the literary world, the reality for young writers and readers of color is that in 2015 only 20% of all children’s books published in the United States were created by African-American, Asian-American, Native/First Nations, and Latino authors. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center has been tracking the diversity in book creators since 1994; and while the number of multicultural books has averaged about 10% for over 20 years, in 2015 the percentage doubled. Despite the exquisite growth of the genre, the level of diversity leaves much to

be desired. For example, according to the 2016 study, six percent of the YA books published in 2016 were written by Black, Latinx and Native authors combined. (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2017) When examining diversity of identities, we must also look to diverse representations of gender and sexuality. A 2014 study done by DiversityInYA.com found that 47 LGBT Young Adult books were published by "mainstream" publishing houses. While this is a 59% increase from previous years, it is slim in comparison to the average total of about 5,000 books annually. Add the additional layer of intersectionality, and a mere 15 of those 47 books featured characters with intersectional [people of color and/or disabled] identities.

Several writers criticize and examine the level of (or lack of) diverse representation in characters, writers and the publishing industry. Whether it be the folks who are receiving book publishing contracts or the editors who are hired to work at major publishing houses (Rankine and Loffreda 2015; Aiello 2015; Jackson 2017) or in literary characters' representation (Myers 2014; Salesses 2015; Willoughby 2016; Buckley 2018), people are acknowledging the problem. However, what is missing is an effort in bridging the two topics with solutions, policy as well as a shift in the teaching practices in the disciplines upholding the industries themselves. Further, there are no examples of critics recognizing the connection between the craft of writing and representation.

While creative writing studies and composition studies have argued for attention to writers identities and ideologies, creative writing studies and craft criticism look at the ways identity informs a writer's perception of cultures and communities of color. Claudia



Rankine and Beth Loffreda's collection of essays *The Racial Imaginary*<sup>5</sup> pushes readers and writers to check their privilege and their imagination. In the foreword, "On Whiteness and The Racial Imaginary: Where Writers Go Wrong in Imagining the Lives of Others," Rankine and Loffreda explain

"to argue that the imagination is or can be somehow free of race - that it's the one region of self or experience that is free of race- and that I have the right to imagine whoever I want, and that it damages and deforms my art to set limits on my imagination- acts as if the imagination is not part of me, is not created by the same web and matrix of history and culture that made "me." (15)

In naming the interwoven layers of racism in our own imaginations, Rankine and Loffreda are calling out the ways ideologies shape our perception of self and the bounds of our creative thought. However, this is only from the perspective of craft. They are highlighting the important and powerful effects on narrative and character development, but not engaging with the writer's identity and their influence on ideological perspectives of their readers.

There is scholarship examining the presence of a writer's identity as a means of enacting ideologies from the perspective of either composition and writing studies (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015; Gee 2008; Villanueva 2004) or creative writing craft-criticism<sup>6</sup> (Cain 1995; Rankine and Loffreda 2015; Saleh 2015), yet often the

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<sup>5</sup> Racial Imaginary- a racial imaginary is something we all recognize quite easily: the way our culture has imagined over and over again the narrative opportunities, the kinds of feelings and attributes and situations and subjects and plots and forms "available" both to characters of different races and their author (Rankine and Loffreda 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Craft-criticism- a term that has been used by Tim Mayers and others, has been defined as a creative-analytical practice in which writers and artists challenge the inherited "lore" of creative writing: the prevailing ideas, or common assumptions about literary production (Adsit, "Critical Creative Writing").

conversations do not intermingle and both disciplines fall short of connecting the importance of having diversity in authors and characters and shaping the future. Additionally, while there are conversations in composition studies or creative writing studies around “enacting identity,” they do not do the robust work to connect this premise to discussions in queer or latinx studies.

Contributors to *Naming What We Know* do productive and important disciplinary work to establish the bounds and fundamental concepts of composition studies. However, by having a majority of white writers doing the so-called ‘naming,’ they help perpetuate a universalizing narrative of white dominance, hegemony, and white supremacy. Through not explicitly unpacking their position of privilege provided by their authority, the contributors fail to engage in critical reflexive pedagogical work and contribute to the normalizing and universalizing narratives that support and uphold the consistent lack of diversity and representation this project seeks to interrogate. Essentially, the contributors of *Naming What We Know*, ignore the power and experience women of color feminisms so explicitly values. Additionally, while the contributors provide the impetus for anti-racist pedagogical practice in the writing classroom, they do not explicitly name or engage with the work already being done by radical women of color feminisms, queer theory, Anzaldúan and borderlands writers, and latinx studies.

It has become commonplace in creative writing studies and english studies to explore the ways a writer’s craft reflects their identities and worldviews. What is often

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left out is a conversation around using performance and/or writing as a tool of resistance and survival. In queer latinx studies, however, the conversation centers around how identity is powerful (Anzaldúa “Wild Tongue”; Moraga “La Güera”; Morales 2007), how the narrative/performance representation is a form of resistance (Anzaldúa “The New Mestiza”; Arrizón 1999; Boffone 2015; Butler 1993, 2017; Muñoz 1999), and how writing and storytelling has the capacity to transform (Anzaldúa “Metaphors;” Keating 2013; Moraga 2003, 2011, 2015). However, these conversations in queer latinx studies are absent of from the pedagogical work of creative writing or composition studies.

### Theoretical Framing

My research questions are grounded in theories of representation, as they emerge from the central concerns of queer latinx studies (Anzaldúa 2012; Arrizón 1999; Muñoz 1999; Keating 2013; Moraga 2003, 2011, 2015; Morales 2007). Taking up their rationale, this project emerges from conversations around complex identities, diverse representation, performance, and the understanding that storytelling has the capacity to create social change and be used as a form of resistance to dominant power structures. The conversations this project enters are grounded in the voices from *This Bridge Called By Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, Gloria Anzaldúa (2007), AnaLouise Keating (2009; 2013) several other voices that follow in the tradition of autohistoria-teoría. In *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, Keating explains the concept “writers who blend their cultural and personal biographies with memoir, history, storytelling, myth and other forms of theorizing. By doing so, they create interwoven individual and collective identities” (Keating 2009, 9). This project takes the notion of autohistoria-teoría practiced

by Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández and through qualitative assessment, examines the influence on their readers.

While the historical and theoretical framing for this project are grounded in Gloria Anzaldúa's work, the disciplinary practices are distinctly founded in cultural studies, the interdisciplinary or post-disciplinary field of inquiry that explores the production of and maps meaning. The field is particularly concerned with issues of power/knowledge in the diverse signifying practices of society. Through applying a queer latinx lens to *Spit and Passion* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*, this project aims to illuminate how representations of difference are “inscribed by relations of power (politics)” (Hall 215). Through concerning itself with power dynamics, representations of difference and the process of meaning construction, this project emphasizes *Spit and Passion* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* as a critical, queer latinx cultural artifacts. Further, this reading centers the memoirs as employing powerfully and critically crafted in order to produce distinctly queer latinx knowledge and representations. The fundamental claim being made through a reading of this kind is rooted in how the primary text uses “*signification*<sup>7</sup> works to produce meaning... and how discourse and discursive practices [like that of the memoir itself] produce knowledge” (Hall 46).

A Brief and Selective Genealogy of Queer Latinx Studies. Covering the entirety of queer latinx studies in a literature review is a project on its own. This selection aims at tracing

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<sup>7</sup> Signification- the use of signs in language.

the lineage of the work relevant to this particular project. Beginning in 1974, Barbara Smith and others started meeting as a Black feminist collective. In 1977, “The Combahee River Collective Statement” was published. This defining moment of Women of Color Feminism remains a discursive symbol for the start of a new paradigm. By forcing readers to simultaneously hold race, gender, sexuality, and class identities, the Combahee River Collective implored readers towards an intersectional perspective before the Feminist buzzword had been coined. The organizing that Combahee River Collective advocated for helped lay the groundwork for queer latinx theory.

By 1981, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa published the first edition of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. From the original solicitation letter, “we want to express... the experiences which divide us as feminists; we want to examine these incidents of intolerance... We want to create a definition that expands what ‘feminist’ means to us (xliv)” explaining that this anthology was created out of a divided community. Through interwoven personal narrative, criticism, theory, interviews, testimonials, poetry, and visual art the collection is the most effective discursive paradigm shift in Feminist theory. Further, this collection becomes the map key for critical, Women of Color, queer theory, mestiza consciousness, and beyond. Further, what continues to be most radical about this text is the proud claim of race, gender, and sexuality. Every contributor not only identified as woman (at the time), but further claimed “lesbian” in their identifiers.

Following the reissue of *This Bridge Called My Back* in 1983, two distinct theoretical frameworks began to develop. The emphasis on a “US-based woman of color

movement” versus a “transnational and cross-cultural bridge-building” (Gaspar de Alba 465) began to drive parts of queer latinx theory. Both sides of the Chicana/Latina Lesbian/Queer theory community were represented by Moraga and Anzaldúa. Both authors began deepening their understanding of the needs they saw in their community(ies).

From the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*, queer latinx theory moved as “lesbian literature.” From the works of Cherríe Moraga (*Loving in the War Years*, 1983) to Ana Castillo’s *The Mixquiahuala Letters* (1986), the genre of Chicana/Latina Lesbian Literature flourished. Both authors were directly criticizing *machismo*<sup>8</sup>. Further, each author grounded their craft in strong Chicana feminist theory that was politically and socially US based theory. Most relevant to Chicana/Latina Lesbian discourse are Moraga’s essays “La Güera” and “A Long Line of Vendidas.” Here, Moraga is laying out the notion of “Theory in the Flesh” or sometimes named as embodied theory. This concept is key to contemporary queer latinx literature. With Castillo’s work, the romantic, sometimes called “lesbian” relationships represented in her writing contributes to the feminist centered tactics that characterizes queer latinx literature.

Chronologically, the next publication to deepen the theoretical formations of queer latinx theory is *Borderlands: La Frontera*. Here, Anzaldúa crafts the tools and symbols deeply embedded in much of the contextualizing literature. Now, over 25 years later, reading *the*

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<sup>8</sup> Machismo- the patriarchal engagement distinct to Chicano, Latino, Hispanic cultures.

*New Mestiza* still brings sounds to the previously unsaid experience of *nepantleras*<sup>9</sup>.

From critical reflections on craft to theorizing beyond reactive resistance, *Borderlands: La Frontera= the New Mestiza* is a core to understanding the mestizaje<sup>10</sup>. By taking up the indigenous roots of the mestizaje, Anzaldúa begins the distinctive queer latinx practice of weaving spirituality into theory. “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” (Anzaldúa 102). Emphasizing transformation, Anzaldúa’s pinnacle texts moves queer latinx theory beyond the “bridge-building” work done in *This Bridge Called My Back*, into transformational paradigm shifting work. What makes the work of *La Frontera* so unique is the space of ambiguity that ground the work. Here too, is where we find Anzaldúa employing the similar “hybridity” philosophy of Cultural Studies and Stuart Hall. By ground her work in decolonization, Anzaldúa provides transformational potentialities for racist, sexist, homophobic and most identity-based work. Taking up “mestiza consciousness<sup>11</sup>” means finding a new space to occupy mentally, theoretically, politically, socially. It means imagining a world beyond division.

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<sup>9</sup> Nepantleras- A term coined by Anzaldúa to describe a unique type of mediator, one who “facilitate[s] passages between worlds.”Nepantleras live within and among multiple worlds and, often through painful negotiations, develop what Anzaldúa describes as a “perspective from the cracks”; they use these transformed perspectives to invent holistic, relational theories and tactics enabling them to reconceive or in other ways transform the various worlds in which they exist (Keating 322).

<sup>10</sup> Mestizaje- the spanish word for “mixture”, mestizaje, as Anzaldúa generally uses it, refers to transformed combinations.

<sup>11</sup> Mestiza consciousness- one of Anzaldúa’s best-known concepts, this “consciousness of the borderlands” is a holistic, non-binary way of thinking and acting that includes a transformational tolerance for contradiction and ambivalence.

The next phase of Anzaldúa's work comes with the anthology *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*. In the introductory piece, Anzaldúa writes "For years I waited for someone to compile a book that would continue where *This Bridge Called My Back* left off. A book that would confront the Racism in the white women's movement in a more thorough, personal, direct, empirical and theoretical way" (Anzaldúa xvi). The origins of the anthology start here. She wanted the next step of the dialogue. At the cusp of "the multicultural 1990s" (Gaspar de Alba 467), Anzaldúa took the "Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color" collection into her own hands. In this collection, she has senior and amateur authors composing in personal narrative, poetry, theoretical essays in order to push, criticize, and grow the dialogue. In classic queer latinx, and Anzaldúan style, the text both offers up new ways of thinking, speaking, interacting and embodies them. While asking contributors to intentionally craft and employ critical dialogue, this collection pushed Women of Color discourse into the hybridity and ambiguity Anzaldúa proposed in *La Frontera*.

From Anzaldúa's work stemmed an entire sub-discipline of Chicana revisionist history including the foundational work of Emma Pérez. Her text *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* not only calls for transformational theory but enacts that transformation. Examining historical methodologies from archaeology to genealogy, Pérez takes up a critical Chicana feminist perspective and exposes the deeply patriarchal, racist, and colonial discourse embedded into "history." For Pérez, "[t]his project is an archaeology of discursive fields of knowledge that write Chicanas into histories" (xiii). She enacts the same critical tool of discursive analysis employed by



Nietzsche and Foucault in order to highlight the role of power/knowledge in constructing the “historical narrative.” In doing so Pérez is criticizing the historical narrative and the ways the Chicano movement merely repeats the same practice in the process of “reclamation.” In response, Pérez offers up the “decolonial imaginary.” Located in the same ambiguous theoretical space “between that which is colonist and that which is colonized” (Pérez 7). Through this method of constructing a narrative of the past, Pérez offers up a way out of the colonizer’s shadow (Gaspar de Alba 470).

The final exclusively Anzaldúan text relevant to the work of this project is the theorizing and enacted work of AnaLouise Keating in her 2012 collection *Transformation Now! Towards a Post-Operational Politics of Change*. In the same practice as Anzaldúa, Keating sees this project as the next step she had be waiting for. While not completely original intellectual work is being offered in this collection, the interdisciplinary application of the concept of “threshold theories” offers up an alternative academic and theoretical practice. Oppositional thinking and scholarly work is epistemologically formed using an ontological approach: Right and wrong. As the epistemological foundation for all academic engagement, Keating notes the ways the work is intrinsically oppositional and degrades our capacity to transform. As such, grounding her proposal in *Borderlands: La Frontera*, and particularly the concepts of *nepantleras* and *nepantlas*, she argues for theoretical work emphasizing “ambiguity and paradox” as well as “radical connectedness” (Keating 10).

While this work does not span the entirety of Anzaldúa’s theorizing, nor the entirety of queer latinx theory, these core texts help frame and contextualize the work

being done by Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández. Further, each core theoretical concept offers up a literary and craft tool which can be excavated from the texts. The fundamental core of how this project examines queer latinx work is based in Radical Women of Color Feminist literary work comes from *This Bridge Called My Back* and the editors Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. In addition to this foundational text, the transnational and US-based Chicana/Latina Lesbian writers that followed helped construct a queer latinx genre for Road and Hernández to occupy.

Notes Towards the Politics of Performativity. Informed by Butler (1990), Kosofsky Sedgwick (2018), Muñoz (1990) and Arrizón (1999; 1999; 2000), this project understands identity to be performative. As such, it adopts the understanding that institutions of power heavily influence and shape a person's identity. However, this project moves beyond the work of theoretically understanding identity as performative and seeks to measure and assess the capacity of this performativity. Even the powerful exploration of artists' survival, performance, and negotiation done by Muñoz in *Disidentifications* (1999) falls short of reflecting on the ideological influences of the performances. What's powerful, though, about Muñoz's assertion is his alignment with Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga surrounding the necessity for awareness of power dynamics influence on identities and ideologies. *Disidentifications* serves as a powerful model to use the on understanding the work being done by Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández to reconstruct dominant narratives.

Writers such as, José Esteban Muñoz would agree that craft is inflected by power dynamics shaped by identities and ideologies, and writers/performers should become

aware of how power dynamics play out in their craft; his opinions diverge from Adler-Kassner et al. however, on his application of identity politics and the ways he applies “identity politics” in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. For Muñoz, his book “participates in a reconstructed narrative of identity formation that locates the enacting of self at precisely the point where the discourses of essentialism and constructivism short-circuit.” (6) Thus, rather than examining the ways identity gets reproduced through craft (performance), he is interested in the ways not identifying with mainstream comes into being. Rather, Muñoz is looking at how subjects not conforming and resisting “dominant public spheres encounter obstacles of enacting identifications” (8). Thus, rather than using the strategy of identification, Muñoz is calling for “disidentification” as a “survival strategy” (18).

To disidentify is to read oneself and one’s own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to “connect” with the disidentifying subject. It is not to pick and choose what one takes out of an identification. It is not to willfully evacuate the politically dubious or shameful components within an identification locus. Rather, it is reworking of those energies that do not elide the “harmful” or contradictory components of any identity. It is an acceptance of the necessary interjection that has occurred in such situations (12).

What’s most significant here about Muñoz’s “disidentification” is the act or “desire for a queer life-world” that holds both the good and the bad, “one in which the “pain and hardship” of queer existence within a homophobic public sphere are not elided” (34). Muñoz is framing an artistic and creative space that holds onto the master’s

tools<sup>12</sup> and learns resistance from them. Or rather, Muñoz is employing what Cultural Studies theorist, Stuart Hall, would name “trans-coding.” Muñoz’s “disidentification” takes the meaning of identification and re-appropriates it (Hall 259).

Within the discipline of English (encompassing Literary Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Studies, etc.), we recognize “how the production of knowledge is wedded to productive power” (Leitch et al. 1473) thanks to the post-structuralist Michel Foucault. As part of the entry point of Postcolonial Studies to the English discipline, we recognize the importance of counter discourse. From Edward Said we get the notion of “Orientalism... a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) the “Occident” (Said 1867). Speaking here, Said designates the perspective of Postcolonial Studies. Through defining “The Orient,” Said’s work helped designate the task of the discipline. “[T]o describe the mechanisms of colonial power, to recover excluded or marginalized “subaltern” voices, and to theorize the complexities of colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial identity; national belonging; and globalization” (Leitch et al 27). Therefore, postcolonial theorists (Bhabha 1994; Gikandi 2001; Loomba 2002) take understandings of difference and the discursive nature of representation to call for counter discursive messages.

With critical perspectives of race, gender, and difference, or simply the examination of discursive power/knowledge as done by Foucault, cultural artifacts are

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<sup>12</sup> Master’s Tools- refers to Audre Lorde’s essay “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”

produced through situated power structures, and are never power neutral. Therefore, using Cultural Studies' notions of stereotyping, transcoding, and identity as performative (Butler 1999), it is clear that the process of cultural production can be both the source of oppression and the site of resistance (Hall et al. 2013). Building from this, my project examines *Spit and Passion* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* as powerfully situated, intentional cultural artifacts that are attempting to use identity politics, trans-coding, and the power of representation to produce counter discursive texts.

From the other end of English Studies (Composition, Rhetoric, Writing, Creative Writing Studies, respectively), I take the examination of the writer and their identity/ideological enactment, the process of writing, literacy, and the importance of composed knowledge and apply it to both Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández. Often though, the work of this spectrum of English is focused on the ways writing and language serve as tools of identification (Villanueva 1995), community (Gee 1989, 2002), and self-hood (Lunsford 1992) for the writer. What makes this project different, is the application of those concepts from both sides of the spectrum. No single project has interweaved theories of representation from the site of reception (Literary, Cultural, Postcolonial Studies) and the side of production (Composition, Rhetoric, Writing, Creative Writing Studies).

My research questions are grounded in theories of representation, as they also emerge from the central concerns of creative writing studies, cultural studies, literary studies, queer studies, and latinx studies. Examining *Spit & Passion* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* from each disciplinary perspective allows this project to highlight the

important work being done by queer latinx authors for themselves, queer latinx Youth, and the communities whose stories are being written.

### Enacting Multidisciplinarity: An Ecological Perspective of Identity

My research draws from the intersections of Creative Writing Studies, Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, Latinx Studies and Chicanx Studies by examining how within young adult fiction, queer latinx authors are a) writing their communities into existence through their craft and b) influencing their readers' ideological perspectives and identity formations by doing so. Each discipline informs my project in a layered manner, but what's most important about each one's inclusion is their contribution in formulating the perspective of identity this project assumes. By integrating cultural, performative, and receptive forms of identity, this project enacts an ecology of identity. In doing so, this project makes room for analyzing identity as a dynamic, evolving, and shifting experience.

Taking an ecological approach is not a new concept. I came to understand an ecological approach via Ecofeminism. In their seminal text, *Ecofeminism* Marie Mies and Ariel Shiva explain it as being about “connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice” (Mies and Shiva 14). Gwyn Kirk describes “[k]ey insights of ecofeminism- that Western thought constructs hierarchical systems defined by dualisms, reinforced by an economic system based on profits rather than needs” (Kirk 6). Applying an Ecofeminist lens often means doing the work of building coalitions and alliances based around political and environmental issues. “There needs to be an authentic connection” (Kirk 12). Ecofeminism works to connect the personal, political, and the environmental.

The next experience I had in applying an ecological approach is through Literary Studies. Ecocriticism can be summarized as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [taking] an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (Glotfelty and Fromm xvii). In their summary, Anne Milne argues beyond simply an “earth-centered” approach but rather one that also “advocate[s] awareness and change.” (Milne “Ecocriticism: Second Edition 2005”) Here, Milne highlights the activist work that is often rooted in this version of Literary Studies. Wrapped within Literary Studies and Ecocriticism is a crux theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa. Her collection *La Frontera: The New Mestiza* articulates “a new concept of personhood that synergistically combines apparently contradictory Euro-American and indigenous traditions... [and] furthers her theory of the new mestiza into an epistemology and ethics she calls ‘mestiza consciousness’: holistic, relational modes of thinking and acting, or... ‘a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes’” (Keating 10). Thus, Anzaldúa was applying an ecological epistemology and ethics from a spiritual, historical, political and material (Lioi 74) perspective.

From a different sect of English Studies, EcoComposition shifted the static, process-centered (Cooper 364) pedagogical approach to Writing Studies to one that allowed for a “model of writing, whose fundamental tenet is that writing is an activity through which a person is continually engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems” (Cooper 367). As such, composition studies has shifted pedagogical focus to “post-process toward the critical categories of race, gender, class, and culture” (Dobrin and Weisser 567). What is most distinctive about EcoComposition versus Ecocriticism is

the switch from a static and unchanging model of understanding and engaging with writing to a model based off “dynamic interlocking systems which structure the social activity of writing” (Cooper 368). This is the root of the concept that inspired my thinking, a *rhetorical ecology*. Pulling from Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle’s introduction to *Rhetoric: Explaining How People Communicate and Make Meaning*, “the best way to understand [any] rhetorical situation is as an ecology, where all the elements an interaction involves—people, events, circumstances, material objects, history, time, place, and space- form a network by which every element touches or influences and ultimately emerges from every other element” (451). Their simplified, concrete explanation of a rhetorical ecology struck me. It helped me locate some of the ideas I had regarding the interconnectedness of writing, reading, and identity.

The common notion that works to incorporate multiple aspects of identity is Kimberlé Crenshaw’s *intersectionality*. In their recent introductory text, *Intersectionality*, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge explore the application of the term as an analytic tool, or rather the application of the concept “mainly, that major axes of social divisions in a given society at a given time...operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities but build on each other and work together” (4). Further, they work to explicate the application of the concept and the ways it “examines how power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing” (7), thus, each institution or social division supports and reproduces the other. What Collins and Bilge help clarify in the field of intersectional knowledge and praxis is the understanding of power. By breaking down the organization of power defining the four domains: interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural



(7), they provide a means to organize, analyze and understand power relations as a result of social divisions.

Here, many would compare the concepts listed above and using an ecological analytic tool as doing the same work. While informed by Collins and Bilge and the field of intersectional knowledge and praxis, I understand *intersectionality* to be an analytical tool that examines the ways *social* divisions build on each other and work together to uphold power relations. However, what I propose with this project is to apply a modified analytic tool by moving beyond social divisions. If we take the same baseline of *intersectionality*, and analyze the ways “power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing” (7), but locate those particular power relations the same ways Cooper (1986), Anzaldúa (2012), Kirk (1997), Dobrin and Weisser (2002) call for in their ecological application, we move beyond the scope of social axes and can engage with identity from a more holistic perspective. Essentially, this project adopts the ways power relations work in social axes but also locates those social axes historically, spiritually, materially and personally.

Further, this project differs because it does not limit the scope of identity. An ecological perspective of identity means taking a holistic and interconnected approach that is socially and powerfully situated. It means no longer having to create space or room for an aspect of self, but rather, accepts the entire complex nexus of relations, situations, dynamics, and flow. An ecological perspective of identity validates the constant flux and negotiation of subjectivity of every aspect of identity. This project views identity as a complex nexus that is negotiated between and among writers and readers and their

cultural, spiritual, historical, material and social spaces/places/times that are mutually reinforcing and shaping one another. Identity as an ecology is concerned with the interrelationships of each aspect of identity and their environmental and embodied effects. Most importantly though, this project applies an ecological perspective of identity in order to highlight and complicate the powerful shifts occurring once a reader is exposed to the two pieces of literature under discussion. Thus, this project's point of inquiry and hypothesis necessitate viewing identity as an ecology because of its examination of the flux and interplay between the dynamics of identity.

An additional layer of using an ecological perspective of identity is the opportunity to examine the ideological influences of the performed/consumed identities. Since this project recognizes the dynamic interplay between different power relations, it creates opportunity to examine the receptive effects of identities on shaping ideological perspectives and worldviews in addition to examining the enactment of the identities themselves. Applying an ecological perspective of identity as an analytical tool demands the exploration of the "co-constitutive relationships between discourses and environments" (Dobrin and Weisser 587) as exhibited through writing and performance, including the personal, political, historical, spiritual and material.

### Methodology

This project aims to investigate two questions: How does exposure to queer latinx Young Adult Fiction broaden or complicate students' understanding of those represented

racess/sexualities/complex identities? And how, through their memoirs, are Daisy Hernández and Cristy C. Road enacting their identities and therefore crafting space for new ideological perspectives? What are some of the symbols both authors use to signify their identities in their literature?

To appropriately engage both positions of inquiry this project takes up two separate methodologies per each inquiry. Each point of interrogation requires a unique and distinct methods approach; therefore, this project consists of two separate spaces of analysis: textual analysis and mixed-methods qualitative assessment.

I find it necessary to first describe, explain and evaluate the perspectives occupied by the authors Daisy Hernández and Cristy C. Road through a textual analysis approach. In doing so, I am able to help reveal some of the potential points of contention and paradigm shifts readers might experience as a result of the distinct cultural identities occupied by the writers. Additionally, because each text being examined is a memoir of sorts, my textual analysis also includes a reading of the writer's identities. Further, this aspect of analysis helps identify the space each writer is crafting within the genre/discourse for their identities and communities, while also examining some potential symbols of queer latinx culture.

In doing a textual analysis, I excavate specific examples of how both Hernández and Road broaden or complicate students'/readers' understanding of those represented races/sexualities/complex identities and enact/create identities and ideologies through bending/diversifying/ expanding genre. In examining the texts from an intersectional queer latinx feminist perspective and using the tools of literary analysis, distinct and

tangible textual evidence is provided for how each author expands the genre of Young Adult Literature in order to carve out space for their queer latinx identity and communities. By carving out space within literature, both Hernández and Road help add to the representation of queer latinx communities, therein they are creating/reinforcing symbols of their communities and their genre of literature.

The second approach used mixed methods qualitative assessment in order to measure, correlate, and predict the shifts occurring in folks' ideological perspectives and identity forming frameworks. Throughout Spring semester 2018, I worked with my Department's English 360/560 Queer Women's Memoir class to recruit voluntary research participants. At the start of the course, after explaining some basic points of inquiry of my research and collecting volunteer participants, I sent out a 'pre-exposure' survey. This survey consisted of 20 questions that tracked demographics, previous reading history, and some of the ways each participant gathered their reading history. Additionally, using a 7-point scale, the survey examined how readers understood the ecology of identity (cultural, writerly, readerly), the intersections of identity, and specifically the queer latinx community.

In collecting a baseline of readers' ideological perspectives and identity forming assumptions and then tracking the shifts after reading the texts, I am able to measure changes in perspective. Further, because I used a before and after survey method I am able to correlate the ideological shift measured with the exposure to the particular texts they read. Additionally, through collecting research participants' weekly reading responses, I am able to measure some of the ideological shifts occurring by doing a

discourse analysis of their writing. In comparing readers' ideological and identity forming perspectives before and after reading, I am able to reveal some of the ways the texts shape readers.

By using a qualitative mixed-methods approach, this research shows comparative evidence of ideological shifts and identity forming knowledge related to exposure to queer latinx Literature. Additionally, the discursive evidence provides proof of the progression of ideological shifts and more complex identity forming knowledge occurring in readers throughout the process of exposure, as well as in the moment shifts in the readers exposure. The addition of the ethnographic assessment provides context to the readers immersion into the context of each novel. Further, because each participant was enrolled in the English 360/560 course, they were immersed into a community of critical analysis and engagement with *Queer Women's Memoirs*. By adding the ethnographic assessment, I provide my own personal experiences with the class community and some of my witnessed communal paradigm shifts, struggles, and even some rejections of the material.

This methodological approach is appropriate from both the examination of how exposure to queer latinx literature broadens or complicates students' understanding of the represented races/sexualities/complex identities and how Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández enact their identities. While all of the previous research examines either texts using representation theories or does a qualitative assessment, this two pronged research project brings together close-reading practices of cultural and literary studies with the qualitative research processes germane to writing studies. Other researchers within

literary and cultural studies traditionally use textual evidence to provide proof for the hypothesis. Paying particular attention to the power of representation in both Hernández and Road's work, this research engages textual evidence to explicate their exhibition of their queer latinx identities and the forms of resistance that served as their means of survival and transformation. This research is followed by mixed-methods qualitative study to track ideological perspectives and identity forming knowledge.

My methodological approach differs from the present literature in the two part approach to the project and the ways this project chooses to assess ideological perspectives and identity formation both pre and post exposure to specific literature. Using the aggregate data collected from the survey tool and the discursive knowledge collected from the reading response assignments provides evidence to the claims made about the specific texts in part 1 of the research. Often times, in the literature there is either a textual/discursive approach OR a qualitative/ethnographic approach. No project does both aspects of the research, and no research looks at the particular ways readers' identity formations and ideological perspectives respond to exposure.

Most of the ethical issues at stake in my research are tied to my Teaching Assistant position in English 360/560. The biggest ethical issue with my project is my presence within the classroom as a Teaching Assistant. This issue is mitigated through anonymizing the students responses. The other potential ethical harms are surrounding the intentions of the research and the personal bias I hold in approaching this topic. Because I am a queer latinx person who has been searching for representations of myself since I was a child, I recognize the ways this research holds deep value for me. Further,

this research is deeply based off of my own experiences in scavenging for representations of myself in literature in order to justify my existence and further, to help me form my own performance of those identities.

The primary mode of mitigating the potential harms are by taking intentional intersectional approaches to my literature by means of recognizing the many complex experiences of my research participants and my own. Further, mitigation of these ethical harms happens through support of my faculty supervisor in guiding my research design and methodological approach. I have considered the potential for no ideological or identity forming shifts in my research participants and limited relevant data collection.

The space where the largest ramifications could take place are within the English 360/560 classroom. This research project has the potential to shift the community of the classroom because despite taking as neutral of a position as possible, the intended outcomes of this research is made clear for many participants. Being an active participant in the classroom community, and having relationships with participants separate from this research allows for a distinct intention to be imagined by participants.

Additionally, my research is distinctly rooted in cultural and social factors. The primary research questions arose from a booming production of queer latinx Young Adult Fiction that is distinct to this generation and reflective of a historical, political context. Additionally, the capacity for agency in identity formation as well as representation shaped this research. It is only because I am a scholar within this specific place and time, and I grew up having particular experiences that this research exists. Further, the point of inquiry is one of interest to several disciplines. However, because I am doing this

research in a small public university in rural California, the influence of larger stakeholders is limited.

This research is founded on an overarching hypothesis that reading certain books distinctly effects a person on the basis of the power of representation. This hypothesis is expanded and more thoroughly developed by my ecological vision of identity. Viewing cultural, reader, and writer identity as mutually reinforcing one another and as a complex nexus of identity that is negotiated between and among social spaces/places/times provides much room for exploration. A more specific hypothesis is focused on the second part of the research, the qualitative/ethnographic assessment. It is my belief that after exposure to queer latinx Literature, readers will have more complicated and realistic understanding of queer latinx communities. Further, I believe that those students who identify with some aspect of the communities represented in the literature, will have more grounded ideological perspectives.

While there is a chance that the results from the qualitative assessment are more sourced from the coursework done in English 360/560 or the participants ideological and identity forming knowledge development beyond the scope of exposure to the specific texts, the value of tracing their development is still present. Despite the value of the correlated data collected, I cannot claim with absolute certainty the participants were “deeply affected” by the selected texts. However, this does not dismiss the ideological and identity forming shifts that are evidenced to have occurred in the participants.



Pathways, Thresholds, Bridges...

At the core of this project are five distinct pillars of inquiry: *Representation, Symbolism, Language, Genre, and Identity*. Since the interdisciplinarity of the project packs a multiplicity of meaning and practice into each topic, each stands as an underlying post to the bridge(s) this project aims to build.

All throughout the envisioning, creation, implementation, and conclusion of this project these pillars repeatedly acted as gravitational forces. Initially, they were thematic points of interest for myself as an academic. They were the starting points for crafting my question(s). As the project progressed, their meaning(s) evolved and complicated. My writing program director would name their existence in my project as *iterative*. As the development of this project continued, each pillar became a rich well waiting to be tapped and even further, they became a network of resources influencing and shaping the project. Most importantly though, each pillar became a purview or perspective, a core gravitational force acting on the shape and substance of my project.

Furthermore, when engaging with the analysis work this project does, I used each pillar as a spire for inquiry. From the themes excavated from both Hernández and Road's texts, to the questions asked in the qualitative assessment *Representation, Symbolism, Language, Genre, and Identity* act as tethers for each query. The topical focus of this project most concerns itself with the ways in which each pillar plays a role in shaping and are shaped by ideological and identity forming perspectives. Additionally, this project uses the pillars collectively because within each definition or understanding of one pillar comes the use of another. Each pillar influences and shapes the other.

Representation. Coming from a Cultural, Critical Race, Critical Gender, Critical Sexuality Studies background it is no surprise my project positions the power of representation at its core. Tied up in the entire project is not simply the “power of representation” but rather, the systems of institutional power/knowledge making, and the discursive forces (re)producing and (re)shaping representation, meaning, language, and culture. In *Representation*, “The Work of Representation,” Stuart Hall articulates “Representation connects meaning and language to culture” (Hall 1). However, this simple definition is complicated by Hall tracing notions of subjectivity, positionality, and signification. In his conclusion, he clarifies, “...we complexified what we meant by representation. It came to be less and less the straightforward thing we assumed it to be at first—which is why we need *theories* to explain it” (45). As such, for the sake of clarity, this project adopts Hall’s *Theory of Representation* which emphasizes meaning construction as the “heart of culture” (46).

Further, this project acknowledges the ways power helps representation work. Often, representation is the site in which power/knowledge and hegemony gets enacted. When it comes to marginalized people’s representation, often, they are crafted in a hegemonic light, reiterating the disproportionate power structures that exist today. This project aims at finding alternatives, taking its focal point to resistance-based representations. This project finds the works of challenging hegemonic representations as a form of shifting the narrative and the root of ideological and identity forming perspective shifts. Hegemonic-resistant representations are the source of this project’s importance.

Symbolism. Symbolism in this project plays to the history of borderlands writing. The “mythos” and metaphors used by Gloria Anzaldúa in *La Frontera/ Borderlands* and her extensive theoretical, personal, writings for *El Mundo Zurdo* have become the language of Chicanas, Latinas, feminists, lesbians, and queers.

Anzaldúa is one of the most successful writers at creating a language for the unspoken. AnaLouise Keating writes in her edited introduction to *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* “Anzaldúa performs radical acts of self-excavation; stripping away social masks and conventions, she bares herself in her writings” (1). For Keating, this is what makes Anzaldúa’s writings so powerful. “By plunging so deeply into the depths of her own experiences, no matter how painful...she externalizes her inner struggles and opens possible connections with her readers” (1). Beyond the connections with her readings, her style of bridge building, storytelling, and metaphor becomes a language for all of us who “define who we are by what we include” (“(Un)Natural Bridges, (Un)Safe Spaces” 245). The inbetween, undefined, threshold is perhaps the symbol that represents the language Anzaldúa created for us. Here, she offers an explanation for its persuasive and powerful symbolism.

“Bridges are thresholds to other realities, archetypal, primal symbols of shifting consciousness. They are passageways, conduits and connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives. Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Náhuatl word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition

space lacking clear boundaries. *Nepantla es tierra desconocida*, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement- an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. (Anzaldúa 243)

*Nepantla* becomes the primary play space for Anzaldúa's writing. She brings her readers into with her, as Keating described. The predicament, however, of existing in the undefined, is not having the language for it. Frequently, Anzaldúa uses metaphors to provide the shape or shadow of a concept that we have not yet had described.

Anzaldúa explains "because metaphor has the power to restructure the collective unconscious through both linguistic and visual means, it is therefore possible for her to alter the unconscious of the reading masses with her own metaphorical constructions" (Aigner-Varoz 47). Even in her perspective of what a writer does, or "shaman aesthetics," elicits a call for transformation. One of the fundamental transformations of thinking/theory Anzaldúa created was the notion of "Mestiza consciousness." Anzaldúa defines it as "a new value system with images and symbols" that may serve to heal the split between... hegemonically differentiated "us" and "them" (Aigner-Varoz 48). She developed the notion of a differentiated consciousness because we, as queer, lesbian, in-between, undefined, people of color have a consciousness of the world that others do not. As such, it was necessary to create a form of language or rather, symbols, to signify the knowledge we carry.

Using a dialectical process to transcend the imposed boundaries of the white heteropatriarchal definitions of knowledge, Anzaldúa uses metaphor and symbol to represent her race and culture/religion (Aigner-Varoz 47). Fundamentally, by using

symbolism and metaphor to communicate, Anzaldúa is transcending language and artificial boundary. She is combating definition. As such, this project adopts the importance of the undefined, in-between and focuses on the Anzaldúan symbols and metaphors to find meaning across difference.

This project values the same types of symbolism and metaphor use as *La Frontera/Borderlands* and all Anzaldúan writing while also accepting the continuous development of such a language. The same discomfort and confusion the Anzaldúa forces her readers to sit in, this project holds up. Symbolism and metaphor use are considered as powerful as Anzaldúa uses them here.

Language. This project grounds its understanding of the politics of language in composition studies. Pulling from Vershawn Young's "Nah, We Straight" and Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues," the understanding of the politics constructing acceptable and valued English is conscious. Both in practice and in study, this project recognizes the ways language is a representation of power dynamics. Complex and loaded, language is used within the many disciplines the project engages as a form of gatekeeping. Further, both of the chosen authors engage with the complicated nature of the politics of language. Additionally, language serves as a site of conflict, both internal and external for the authors, their readers, and theorists who engage with similar topics and help lay the groundwork for some of the developing reflections this project engages.

From her preface to the first edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa explains, "The switching of "codes" in this book from English to Castilian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all these

reflects my language, a new language- the language of the Borderlands.” This project adopts the language of the Borderlands. There is Spanglish, informal English, basuda español, and a plethora of hybrid languages included and used in this project and the work within it.

Genre/Form. The disciplinary work of this project concerns itself with several genres. First, the master’s thesis. Second, the memoir. Third/Fourth, the literary and/or qualitative assessment. And finally, the narrative.

With its groundwork occupying many disciplines and their corresponding genres and forms, lines are blurred. As such, this project works under the guise of the complicated understanding that genre is used by both writer and reader to understand the form and structure. However, the very nature of this project allows for the expected structure to be challenged and even, turned onto itself. Therefore, this project takes up the idea that genre and form will be blurred and fluid. It both embodies and understands that genre is intentional from both author and reader (Hart-Davidson, Bazerman, Roozen 2015).

Additionally, with respect to Anzaldúa and other borderlands writers, form is played with and blurred in this project and the subsequent texts as a form of exploratory and iterative reflection. By definition, this project complicates the practice of defining and that is embodied in its form, the included authors’ forms, and the anticipated future endeavours of this project.

Identity. Arguably the foundation of this project, *Identity*, serves as the most complex nexus of understanding. As the foundational concept this project is conceived

out of, *identity* requires unpacking. This concept is also the most versatile of my project's pillars. As a result of the multidisciplinary of this project, *identity* becomes a nexus of disciplines. From *cultural identity*, *writer identity*, and *reader identity* this project is focused on the shifts occurring among, between, and across each layer of identity and then some.

First and foremost, the work of engaging with identity with recognition that each specificity of it is powerful pulls from Radical Feminist Theory. The notion of a *theory in the flesh* gives credit to the knowledge we gain from our experiences. As the framing for one of the chapters in *This Bridge Called My Back*, they explain the concept. "Daily, we feel the pull and tug of having to choose between which parts of our mothers' heritages we want to claim and wear and which parts have served to cloak us from the knowledge of ourselves...This is how our theory develops" (Moraga 19). Thus, employing a "theory in the flesh" means respecting the value, knowledge, and experience everyone possesses rooted in their multiple, intersecting identities.

Further, this project adopts the writing studies threshold concept: *Writing Enacts and Creates Identities and Ideologies* (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015). This notion is based on the practice of writing as a form of identification and ideological reflection. Further, through writing, we are able to interpret and articulate different aspects of the self and the ways in which we perceive the world around us. Tony Scott explains "to be immersed in any culture is to learn to see the world through the ideological lenses it validates and makes available to us. Writing is always ideological because discourses and instances of language use do not exist independently from cultures and their ideologies"

(49). Thus, our identities and the ways we “make sense of the world around us” reflect and influence one another. From our writing, our identities and ideological perspectives can be excavated.

### Escribir Pena

If you ask anyone in mother’s or my own generation, in my family, we do not speak Spanish. Like many Latinx, my family’s generational knowledge/trauma can be traced using California’s history. As la madre, Gloria, writes “This Land was Mexican once, was Indian always and is. And will be again” and as such, we hold our hir/stories and knowledge with every new generation. While we are indigenous to this land, the place is not ours. And each generation has experiences and carries their own trauma into the next.

My grandmother speaks Spanish, but had to teach herself how to “properly” write in Spanish because English was the only language her parents wanted her to “know,” despite her parents only speaking Spanish. My mother, while raised in a Spanish speaking home by her grandparents, was raised in the outer Los Angeles basin during the 1960s and 1970s. Going to school during this time meant learning English only, and speaking Spanish during this time risked deportation. If you looked brown enough, sounded brown enough, or even spoke with so much as an accent Mexican-Americans were vulnerable to deportation<sup>13</sup>. As such, my mother and her subsequent children never learned to speak “proper” Spanish.

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<sup>13</sup> [Great Depression Era policy of “Mexican Repatriation” 1931-1936](#)



My grandmother, being the eldest, coveted her knowledge and expertise of the language (lineage/knowledge/memory), and punished/shamed us whenever we attempted to hold a conversation in Spanish or when we would code-mesh into Spanglish. “No quiero escuchar esa basura *Spanglish*, y no entiendo porque quieres hablar en Espanol quando tu es una guerita?” she would say to us. *I don’t understand why you want to use that trash language when you are light skinned.* Always, over and over again. “Tú eres güera, porqué necesitas hablar en español! Tienes palabras en inglés, usalos!” *You do NOT need Spanish, you have English, use it!*

The phrasing sticks in my throat, captures the tip of my tongue and chokes the rhythms and movements my body knows/wants but cannot find. I am 27 years old and the only Spanish I can use without hesitation is what my grandmother considers basuda. While I compose my master’s thesis, I am learning how to speak Spanish the “proper” way. I feel like a toddler that has full articulation our sounds, rhythms, and embodied understandings without the words to articulate them. When I write though, I write/think in Spanish because of the ways I was taught to feel in Spanish. I noted this frequency particularly when trying to describe and explore texts who use this same approach. “*Deslenguadas. Somos los del español deficiente*” (Anzaldúa 80). My writing comes with mucho dolor pero es necesario para la curación y la narración. I want to struggle. I

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want to write out the pain, through the pain, to move through it, and to put into praxis the very theories I am attempting to validate.

### Coming to Inquiry

The primary claim being made in this project arose from my teaching First Year Writing in the Fall of 2017. One of two primary texts I used for the course was *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle. The primary portion of the text refers to threshold concepts of writing as (non-liminal) moments students/writers experience as they are developing their skills and knowledge in writing. While there is one meta-concept and five overarching concepts, my own inquiry and the work of this project are concerned with just one: *Writing Enacts and Creates Identities and Ideologies*. With contributions from composition rockstars in the likes of Andrea Lunsford, Victor Villanueva, and Kathleen Yancey this section was paradigm shifting. In “Naming What We Know: The Project of This Book,” Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle share the process of coming to the collection. First and foremost, the intentions behind the collection were to, as the title infers, name the things those within the discipline know about composed writing (2). The part of the project that pertains to this project is “intended to serve as a sort of crowd-sourced encyclopedia of threshold concepts of writing studies” (3). Pulling together 29 contributors from across the discipline, and further, criteria mapping (4) the bounds and limits of the discipline, the project curates core values, methodologies, and provides exigence for future disciplinary work.

While, as a child who used journaling and writing as a form of solitude and survival in times of turmoil, this concept is profound not in its contemporaneous development, but rather in the power of naming it. In the introductory section, Tony Scott explains “[o]ur conceptions of everything-- gender identities and roles, people’s proper social statuses, what it means to love, the proper basis for separating what is true from what is false-- are inescapably shaped by ideologies” (48). Scott is laying out the basis for the claims, that ideologies are important because they help us “make sense of the world around us *through*” (48) them. This is imperative to writing studies in the critical pedagogical implications because it names the discursive power and effects of teaching writing. Further, the claims made by the contributors of this section name an exigence for the future of writing studies, critical pedagogy, and creative writing studies.

The claims being made by the sections of the concept build off the work of James Paul Gee, Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin. First, Gee helps frame the inquiry through questioning what group the teaching of writing will apprentice the learner into (48). This question is packed with layers upon layer of complexity. While it seems, on the surface a simple question of educational pathways, it’s actually acknowledging the power dynamics built into different, diverse discourse communities. Therefore, the initial question is only possible through “the premise that there is no general literacy: literacy is always in some way involved in the negotiation of identities and ideologies in specific social situations” (48). Vygotsky describes “how external speech becomes internalized and then comes to frame how we think, self-identify, and act in the world” (49). Vygotsky’s work studying language acquisition helps implicate literacy in identity

development. In this section, Scott is attempting to articulate the ways we learn, view, and interact with the world through discourses, and therefore internalize them (49).

Perhaps the most important claim made in this section, “[t]he understanding that writing is an ideological, socially involved practice and thus inescapably implicated in identity making” (50).

Editors Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle selected five different writing studies researchers to break down *Concept 3: Writing Enacts & Creates Identities & Ideologies*. Tony Scott’s lead section explains, “[a]s ideological activity, writing is deeply involved in struggles over power, the formation of identities, and the negotiation, perpetuation, and contestation of belief systems” (49). In the introductory segment of the concept, Scott is making the connections between teaching and writing with ideologies and identity formation. Framed under the guise of disciplinary practice, Scott notes “[t]he understanding that writing is an ideological, socially involved practice and thus inescapably implicated in identity making has vexed the project of writing education and the institutional structures that facilitate it...” (50). Here, Scott names the exigence for the concept and thus sets up the value of the remainder of the section. I.e. why does it matter that writing reflects how we see the world and ourselves in it?

From here, Adler-Kassner and Wardle choose Kevin Roozen to articulate *Writing is Linked to Identity*. Here, Roozen explains “through writing, writers come to develop and perform identities in relation to the interests, beliefs, and values of the communities they engage with...” (50) Roozen et al. establishes writing as a form of identity expression, therefore “[t]he act of writing, then, is not so much about using a particular

set of skills as it is about becoming a particular kind of person, about developing a sense of who we are” (51). From Roozen’s section, *Concept 3: Writing Enacts & Creates Identities & Ideologies* is further explored by Kathleen Blake Yancey (*Writers’ Histories, Process, and Identities Vary*), Andrea A. Lunsford (*Writing Is Informed By Prior Experience*), and Heidi Estrem (*Disciplinary and Professional Identities Are Constructed Through Writing*). Each author further reinforces the claims being made by the others in the chapter while also working to establish a baseline for the discipline.

The final selection of the chapter brings together every one of the previous scholars claims. Victor Villanueva’s selection *Writing Provides a Representation of Identities and Ideologies* names not simply the notion that writing comes to exhibit the writer’s identity and ideology. He clarifies by being grounded in only identity politics “there is a risk... of reducing cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, or class relations to their “natures,” especially when writers do this as they imagine their audiences and their identities” (57). Villanueva suggests “because all writing is inflected by power dynamics shaped by identities and ideologies, writers must become aware of how those identities and ideologies are represented in their writing” (57). For Villanueva, no matter how neutral or charged we intend our writing to be, we as writer/readers can never predict the context someone experiences the writing with. Simply put, Villanueva is calling for writing instructors and the like to ask two guiding questions in their pedagogy: “What’s being said? And What’s left unsaid? These two simple questions can begin to uncover the power dynamics contained in all writing” (58).

The notion of writing being dynamic, exploratory, performative, and powerfully situated are exactly the claims necessary to understand why the authors, Cristy C. Road and Daisy Hernández, and the texts they are composing matter. The disciplinary work being done in composition studies following the likes of *Naming What We Know* contributors sounded a lot like the voices I found in latinx and chicanx studies, but from the framework of teaching writing. Therefore, I frequently found myself thinking of the stories that helped shape my writing and my identity. I thought of the writers who were enacting dynamic, exploratory, performative, and powerfully situated identities and how it felt like they gave me permission to exist. I thought about the tools and resources those stories were for me and my own survival. I thought of this, and I wanted others to understand it and value it. This is how my project found me.

CHAPTER 2: IN THE WAY OF THE PATH LAID OUT: *A CUP OF WATER UNDER  
MY BED*

Introduction

When a person encounters a text, what makes it stick?

This chapter aims to explore how through representations of complex and holistic diverse queer latinx characters, Daisy Hernández's memoir *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* follows the Anzaldúan tradition of autohistoria-teoría. Thus, *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* weaves individual identities with collective identities to create a more complex ideological perspective for her readers. *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* explains how as a first-generation Cuban-Colombian, Daisy Hernández began negotiating/translating between worlds at an early age. Historically contextualized through Reagan United State politics, Hernández and her family navigated her becoming while “the suits in Washington were waging their private wars in Central America, when they began shoving the border into the desert, when they insisted, ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell,’ when they signed NAFTA and everyone began seeking the safety of corners.” (Hernández xii) This memoir is the ideal site of an ecological analysis of identity because she distinctly locates the influence of language, power, silence, gender, love, loss, transgression, cultural expectations, religion, and writing in her specific experience.

Furthermore, what makes this text an ideal site of analysis, is the reflective nature of the memoir as a space for Hernández's own externalized negotiations of the different forces on her identity and ideological perspectives. Through crafting her memoir, she explores how language, storytelling, and writing serve as tools of survival and resistance to the white hegemonic dominant discourses she negotiates on a day to day basis. This chapter explores the institutional, cultural, political, spiritual, historical, and material contradictions *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* interrogates.

Using a thematic perspective, *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* is a critique of the so-called "American Dream," the classic "Coming Out" Narrative, and the traditional "Immigrant Narrative." At its core, Hernández positions the characters in *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* in frequent contradictory and transformative spaces to the social constructions that uphold the American Dream, White Supremacy, and Cis-heteropatriarchy. *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* is a distinctive historical, political, material, spiritual and critical perspective of Hernández's start as a writer. Every aspect of the memoir works to interrogate and complicate the social apparatus of the United States. Further, Hernández works to articulate the false and contradictory nature of these traditional narratives. Her memoir acts not only as an inquisition into the functions of the social apparatus, but carves out space for a different, more dynamic narrative. Most influential, though, are the representations of fully realized and actualized Queer/Latinx characters and communities. Hernández constructs a perspective for readers to understand and employ in opposition to the traditional narratives.



Divided into three parts, *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* moves through Daisy Hernández's life and the lessons that come in her growing pains. Part one: "Before Love, Memory"; "Stories She Tells Us"; "The Candy Dish"; and "A Cup of Water Under My Bed" help define and inform the social apparatus shaping Hernández's becoming. Whether the *cuentos* explore the power relations involved in navigating Spanish and English or the lessons her mother teaches her about womanhood and loneliness, the first part of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* is used to lay the groundwork for the points of contradiction and inquiry Hernández takes in her memoir. Part two: "Even If I Kiss a Woman"; "Queer Narratives"; and "Qué India" look at the many personal, cultural, spiritual, and social transgressions Hernández lives through. This section still engages with part one's definitions of gender, class, race, culture, and religion but the *cuentos* are told by a more present and active Daisy and apply a more critical lens to the power relations at play. Part three: "Only Ricos Have Credit", "My Father's Hands", and "Blackout" explore themes of acceptance and hard learned lessons only Daisy experiences in her family. This culminating section applies the same critical understanding used in part two, but from a more compassionate place. Here, Hernández is navigating the complexities of the same power relations with a more matured and critical perspective and most importantly, with a more rooted acceptance of her family, self, and future. The final *cuentos*, "Después" are the moments where Daisy is both alone and home, simultaneously. She is able to hold all of the lessons from her life and use them in her own story.

Embracing My Wicked Wicked Ways: Tell Her How To Go

La gran filósofa, Gloria Anzaldúa writes about “our fragmented and incomplete discourse” (xvii) and calls upon her readers to do the work to fill in the gaps. Often, in reading both *Spit & Passion* and *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* it is as though each author is responding to a similar call. Being the first generation American, queer, Latinx writer means having complex stories to tell that have the potential to shape the present, past and the future. The power of possessing a pen para escribir historia means possessing El espíritu santo con La Virgen and all the weight of your ancestors silenced voices to share. What form do you choose? What language do you compose in? Where is there room for you to re-write/re-correct la historia de su familia of becoming?

*para todas las hijas..*

Hernández frames her memoir using una tía para todos los escritores, Sandra Cisneros...

*What does a woman inherit*

*that tell her*

*how to go?*

A poem reflecting on the transgressions and fruta Cisneros chose in opting for the writer’s life over the expectations and pressures of her family/culture/traditions, “The Writing Life: Poem as Preface” is used as the prelude to her collection of poetry *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* and frames the moment in her lifetime the poems take place. This poem is often noted as a Cisneros’ examination of “wickedness” in regards to the “transgression of various boundaries particular to Chicanas’ history, culture, and family

structure” (Estill 25). In other critics’ reading of *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* and Cisneros’ own reflections of her “creative writing, that wickedness involves not only a free and powerful sexuality but also the violation of gender expectations” (Estill 25). As such, in referencing and framing her memoir with this collection, the informed reader begins to assume some of the same significant shifts of identity, communit(ies), and perspective are being negotiated by Hernández in *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*.

They Come For Me: Learning Language, Silence, and Power

The preface of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* is Daisy’s telling of having a city official come and examine her home. Being a first-generation child, she is called upon to translate. In this first exchange Hernández gives her readers a taste of the contradictory nature of calling a place/space home that is viewed by the “white man” with his “clipboard in his left hand” (xi) as somewhere/a thing to be ‘Condemned’: “I was about twelve at the time and I didn’t know the Spanish word for condemned. I didn’t have a word in our language that would say, This photograph on the wall.... the stories you tell us--- he’s saying none of this matters” (xi). However, what Hernández illuminates is not simply the contradiction and sense of unbelonging of the physical house, but the opposing perspective of the town official that their entire way of living (pot of beans, stories, radio), their home, doesn’t matter.

A young Hernández searches the limits of her language to explain this words, this... judgment and ultimatum to her mother. The girlhood memory frames the memoir as a reminder of the ways perspective and value shapeshift across language and culture. Additionally, Hernández is framing her memoir as a form of exploration and

documentation, a testimony (xii), that what she experienced, her knowledge and life and family, were real. “I wanted to understand my mother’s questions and my auntie who thought I was *una india* and my father who drank too much. I needed to see on paper the women and the father I had loved and resisted and betrayed, and to write them without the *mancha* of a white man who thought our lives and our stories should be bulldozed” (xii). This two-page introductory cuento articulates Hernández’s constant negotiation of space, values, the politics of language, what comes between languages, what gets lost in translation, and the position of an english speaking child in a spanish speaking family in an english speaking world. 2 pages helps frame the memoir’s journalistic investigation and authoritative reflection. In form and in practice, the memoir shows the world’s limitations and occupies la frontera/the borderlands.

A common experience Hernández writes about is the process of (un)learning language, silence, and power. Her earliest written memory of negotiating a bilingual world comes in the cuento on the first day of kindergarten: “Miss Reynolds is the kindergarten teacher... she speaks the funny language that comes out of the television set at home when we are not watching telenovelas or the *noticias*... It is English, a language that sounds like marbles in the mouth” (3). The deep confusion of an English speaking school frames the memory of the first two years in school for Hernández. The only reference point of English Hernández has is from television. “... she talks like the cartoon character Mighty Mouse” (3). Confusion frames the experience of her child perspective. “I wait for Miss Reynolds to start talking like my mother” (3). The language that matters for young Hernández isn’t the funny one that comes out of the television and is strictly

used for entertainment. As a young child, the authoritative voice she knows best is that of her mother, and yet, the white women do not speak the same language. This is the first step to Hernández's indoctrination to the English Speaking Educational Complex.

Her indoctrination to the English-speaking world takes place in the first 5 pages of the memoir framing the constant contradiction Hernández has to negotiate. "I am not to go the way of the two people I long for in the thick terror of the night" (5). What becomes even more contradictory: not only is Hernández being pressured to move away from the language of her homelife, but further, she is punished for not being familiar with the world she is still learning. The first experience of the English-speaking world's disciplinary action is simple: "A teacher comes for us one day. Just two of us... I don't know why we are being taken from class" (4). Applying the same actionary perspective, "They come for me" (3), as that which framed the start of the chapter, Hernández subtly reminds the reader of the inevitability of the power/knowledge that comes with English.

In her same cuento, Hernández works to explain the innocence, but also, the fear that comes with learning English. "...my friend starts crying, and hers are not baby tears. They are full blast, *llorona*<sup>14</sup>wails. She roots herself to the ground and refuses to take one more step" (4). This moment comes to symbolize the inner child emotions getting compartmentalized by Hernández in order to master the politics of English. La llorona is the mystical Latinx/Xicanx symbol for the punishment that comes with an empowered

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<sup>14</sup> La Llorona- "that mythical, mystical Wailing Woman of the Mexican and Chicano culture who appears in my writing as everything from ghost to guardian angel, and who is my primary symbol of individuation" (Gaspar de Alba viii).

women, she is a symbol for the agony of empowerment, or often deployed as a lesson for those who transgress the social expectations of womanhood within Mexican and Chicano Culture. For Hernández, this moment roots itself as the representation of her relationship with English. The other little girl being taken into a special classroom to work on her English “yells and twists... as if she will choose self-mutilation over what is to come at the hands of white women. As for myself, I don’t fight, I follow” (4). Here, Hernández reflects on the ways she is complacent to the whitewashing of her identity. Whether it is because her parents encourage her to be “the one who is supposed to find out” (12) referring to what would happen if the women in her family knew English. Yet, despite her reluctance in the authoritative voice, what actually happens is acceptance. Despite her absence of resistance to her English indoctrination, there still remains confusion. “In Spanish, we have *cartas*. Tia Rosa’s husband uses them to talk with the spirit world... The cards are paper doors only special people can open” (5). Yet here she is, presented with *cartas* but they hold different meaning. “I look at the white woman’s cards and listen to her bold English words... and there is all the evidence of what is to come in my life” (5). From here forward, the caricatures of English and Spanish battle out for control and demonstrate their social and political capital/power, their differences and possessions within the life of Hernández.

Being indoctrinated into the United States school system is a process of cultural cleansing for Hernández. It is a force of assimilation. She moves between the two worlds, highlighting their purpose, power, and position. For Hernández, losing Spanish is slow. “It’s gradual. It is like a parasite, a bug crawling in your stomach that no one else can

see...” (12) Her assimilation make her unrelatable to her family and disconnected. Yet, it is what they want. “I want Spanish and the fat cigars and Walter Mercado<sup>15</sup> on TV every night. To love what we have, however, is to violate my family’s wishes” (13). In other words, “I begin resenting Spanish” (11). For Hernández, Spanish is defenseless and takes all the blame. She is the embarrassment (12) of growing up: “I blame Spanish for the fact that I don’t know more words in English. I blame her for how bad I feel when the white teachers look at me with some pity in their eyes. I blame Spanish for the hours my mother has to work at the factory” (12). In her childhood, Spanish is the cause for all of the disorder in Hernández’s achievement capabilities. The achievement comes at a cost, though: “Because I have to leave Spanish, I have to hate it” (12). At what cost comes with hating the language your parents speak? What does it do to your understanding of self?

If Spanish is the language of home, or rather the language of home, and “everything real happens in Spanish” (6), what does it make of your own understanding of self if you are working to lose it? Of your community? Of your culture and your ideological perspectives? “I enter the book publishing industry after college... This job, after all, isn’t just a job. It is the whole point of having learned English” (16). Being the “one” who is supposed to master the foreign language skews your perspective. Your family upholds another discourse over their own. They perpetuate shame when Spanish

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Mercado- “Walter is like us. He speaks Spanish. He looks directly into the television camera and into our hearts...” (9).

words are the only one's understood. "The author Minal Hajratwala has written, '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). This becomes the metaphor of Daisy filling her mouth with the fruit of the English language. Losing the tongues of her mother and father to be replaced with the powerful and important English words.

Most significant in articulating Hernández's experience of indoctrination is exactly that: articulating it. Writing about it. Cuando nos leemos cuentos que conocemos, our knowledge is validated. This memoir serves as a representation and cultural artifice of the knowledge and experiences of not only those from a Spanish speaking household, but anyone who is indoctrinated into English within the United States. Through her craft, Hernández is making space for los cuentos de otras idiomas. Additionally, as Hernández grows up en la frontera/ in the borderlands, her experience of negotiating them comes to highlight the material reality of the politics of English and all language within the United States. It is her material experience of la frontera that helps her readers comprehend the in-between perspective.

I had to hate spanish in order to leave it.

Hernández is forced in a visceral way to choose English or Spanish. Moreso, however, she is forced to confront the power relations and social capital that comes with each language. "They have the respect of my parents. By virtue of their English and the light color of their faces, these teachers determine the words that creep into my dreams at night. I envy them. I want what they have. I want my words to matter" (10). Yet, she is constantly having to negotiate the ways the two worlds collide, corrode, influence, and



overlap one another. She is constantly faced with the ways they are not separate, they are simply different in power. In this text, even the moments that would likely be construed as punishable become reflective moments on the dynamics of power between the two cultures. “The poverty in Latin America means that many people do not know how to sign their names, let alone read or write. Penning your name is a sign of progress, no matter what you are signing” (8). Here, she is being punished for still not being able to properly “speak English” (7), but what is most significant in the household is the fact that her mother can write her name, giving perspective to the power relations that frame her life and family.

Hernández is forced to grapple with the punishment of progress alone. Her culture, su historia de familia es compromised by the social, political, and cultural structures within the United States. She cannot articulate or craft her community in the memoir without also crafting out the narrative the United State politics that influenced and shaped them. In composing her constant negotiation of the politics of language, Hernández guides the readers through the inconsistency, confusion and doubt her world percolates. When she first begins to comprehend the power associated with English. she writes of coming to understand letters and wanting to share their capacity. “My mother, I have decided, needs to have them. In English. I believe they will rescue her from the horrors of this lifetime....I am so young. I think language is all a woman needs” (27). This *cuento* is focused on the most formative person in Daisy’s life, her mother. Whether reflecting on the power dynamics of language, referring to the different symbols in the

text, crafting out her identity, or even discussing coming to her sexuality Daisy's mother is one of the key influences on her reflections.

Through her exchanges with her mother, with language, and with what comes when you master English, Daisy brings her readers along as she unpacks the lessons around language, silence and the power that comes with them both. As such, the reader finds themselves reimagining what counts as knowledge (*theory of the flesh*) and who gets to tell the stories in the first place. Daisy's lessons on language from school, her lessons on silence or rather what happens when you don't have the words or the language helps Daisy and her readers develop a more complex understanding of power relations in connection to the politics of language.

#### My Mother's Favorite Stories: Gender, Love, & Loss

Throughout "The Stories She Tells Us," Hernández is using storytelling to narrate her relationship with her mother. The movement and form that each of the stories take follows the growth happening in the mother/daughter dynamic. Moving from bedtime stories about leaving, escaping, and surviving "the violence... in the jungles of Colombia" (21) where she learns "[her] mother is an expert in the relationship between silence and language. She knows when and for how long to permit the stillness to step in and take its sovereign place" (22). These same stories inform the readers understanding of the mother/daughter relationship. Hernández illuminates it explicitly with young Daisy's perspective. "I listen to her, my heart no longer an organ in the body... My eyes are closed and the world is only my mother's large ragdoll arm soft against my cheek, her Spanish with its measure silences, and that horrible knowledge--- that a girl may have to

live without her mother--- weighs on my chest like a stone, like death” (24). This is the young and simple understanding of their relationship. Complete and utter love and infatuation with her mother and the world existing only through the extensions of her. Her mother is the groundwork for her reflections. “As a child, I don’t know how to find myself in stories. Sometimes I am in my mother’s *cuentos*...” (28). As a young girl, not yet admittedly a writer, her mother even helps shape Daisy’s storytelling. In “Stories She Tells Us,” Hernández moves from the bedtime stories about the journey her mother took to come to this country, about never having been “far from her mother” (23) which serve as lessons for young Daisy. “There is always the child learning the nature of fear, the promise of happy endings. The stories my mother tells are crowded with monsters” (23). As their relationship evolves, so does the storytelling. “It must have been around the time I was nine that the stories moved. I must have wanted to be in my own bed at night... Her stories stepped into other moments of our lives...” (28). Now her mother is telling the stories of learning about womanhood and loneliness. This story is juxtaposed by a bright and pure imagery: a “golden” room and “The Virgin Mary, confined to a spot above the bed, watches over us, and my mother remembers the time she first learned what it means to be a woman” (28). The lesson, however, is framed by naivety and shame. The “normal day” where she began menstruating is framed by her mother not talking about “the bleeding,” and “her brothers laughing and telling her about the prostitutes they know” (28). Definitions of womanhood get framed with shame and patriarchal understandings of consumption. Now that she can get pregnant, she must be a prostitute.

The following *cuento* helps transition to the next phase of Daisy's life. "But I am grown now. I am writing this story, and I have questions that feel harsh in the morning light and also necessary... Which is to say, why am I writing and not my friends or my sister? Why her and me? Why are we willing to leave home?" (29). The agency in Daisy has shifted. She is no longer the audience, but the storyteller. The one recording the story and asking questions. What comes next is another instance of young Daisy trying to give her mother the tools of empowerment and understanding she gained in the United States Education Industrial Complex. "Feminism, I want her to know, is what will liberate her" (30). Her aim is to help her mother and the women like her. Daisy approaches her mother thinking "she should organize with the other women at the factory to demand their back wages. This is what women have done before. I've read about it" (30). Naive Daisy thinks that since she has read about the organizing, she possess the power/knowledge, the solution, to her mother's problems.

The exchange becomes a published piece in *Ms.* magazine. "I don't know the word in Spanish for feminist, so I write about not knowing. I write about the places between Spanish and English, between my mother's stories and my own" (30). This evolves into a deeper exchange between Daisy and her mother. Something the reader can mark as a moment of measure between the two. The distance that English and Spanish put between mother and daughter. Her mother responds to this distance with sadness. "'*Me dió tristeza*'... The English translation.... is not the equivalent of the Spanish. When a woman says in Spanish that something has made her sad, it sounds like she has kissed her child goodbye and boarded an airplane *pa' el Norte*" (31). Yet, to follow, "A

few weeks after, though, she is sitting next to me at the table and asks, “What are you reading?”... I look up startled.... My mother has never asked me for the name of an author... “What does she write about?” I stare at her slightly disoriented. Before I can think too much, I am racing.... Gloria’s ideas of borderlands...*Ni aquí, ni alla*” (31). The desperation in this exchange is rooted in Daisy’s desperation to connect with her mother, the desperation rooted in the space in-between Spanish and English that she wrote about, *que fue lo mismo que hizo que su mama se sintiera triste*. However, what is most shocking to Daisy is not her mother’s rejection of this concept but rather the recognition, “She lowers her eyes to the book’s cover, then looks back at me, waiting for more, and the idea begins to bloom in me: my mother already knows this” (31). This comes to demonstrate one of the crucial lessons learned by Daisy, from her first and favorite teacher, her mother. “...therein is the riddle: a child has to leave to return” (32). This adult perspective juxtaposed to the heartache of childhood Daisy still holds the same lesson. Leaving your mother is heart wrenching, but “we always find what we needed was right at home” (31). Finally, Daisy begins to understand that the power/knowledge she is desperate to share with her mother isn’t needed. “It was me, not my mother, who needed English, who needed the stories and feminist theories. Without them, I might never have come back to her” (32).

The evolution of her mother from a “*mueñca de trapo*” (21) into the woman “in her late sixties” (32) where Daisy recognizes her “mother is a separate woman from [her], one with her own life, a separate country, if you will” (33) helps demonstrate the arc of their relationship. This separation, this individuality her mother displays is a strong

moment of recognition because it is a moment of agency in her mother that hasn't been witnessed before. Her mother is always defined through her connection to others: daughter, wife, sister, mother. Yet, the final image Hernández uses of her mother is something other than being defined by others, it is self. "Her arm is reaching into the sky like an inverted exclamation point. Her right hand is not calling anyone to her but is instead announcing her" (33). This is the moment Hernández wants her reader to hold of her mother. She challenges her previous constructions of her as a rag doll, as a woman that "scares easily" (21) and reminds herself, and her readers, that her mother is a strong, intelligent, ambitious, and independent woman.

This final closing of "The Stories She Tells Us" has Hernández and her readers that follow reflecting on what it means to be a woman in her family. Frequently defined by her relation to others, Daisy's mother suddenly holds autonomy. This contradiction and shift in Daisy's perspective of her mother provides her readers with a pathway to that same shift. Through reading Daisy's own internal development of her mother, readers are able to experience stories that challenge hegemonic definitions of gender, particularly womanhood. Furthermore, the culturally romantic and intense experience of love between Daisy and her mother helps shift perspectives on love, and even loss. The final chapter of part one houses a culmination of the three previous mediations. Putting together the politics of language from *Before Love, Memory* with the negotiation of representation and culture from *Stories She Told Us*, with the perspective and exploration of spirituality and constructions of knowledge from *The Candy Dish, A Cup of Water Under My Bed* explores women who know. Through these women, Daisy is

taught lessons about what it takes to survive, how to free yourself, forgiveness, faith, the price of knowing, and the power of naming.

### The Women Who Know

Crafted with *cuento* after *cuento* of the “women who know” or “read tarot cards and cups of water” (55) to provide some insight into the unknown. The important people to Daisy, “my mother and my father and my Tía Chuchi believe these women know something we do not” (56) constructing both the cultural and familial practice of having faith contrasted by Daisy’s own disbelief. “We don’t visit the women very often, but somehow there they are--- at the center of our lives” (56). Throughout her childhood, the women are only engaged with via her mother or Tía Chuchi. As such, the questions, the responses of the “*brujas*” (56) “tell us what we need to know about the future. Us. My future is always plural. It is always about my mother and my father and my aunts and my sister” (54). The knowledge is skewed for young Daisy and so follows her faith. However, what roots her disbelief is the sense of betrayal that comes with one of the “women who knows.”

After an incident of abuse, where Daisy’s father beats four or five year old Daisy for “insisting on [her] mother” (57) with a belt, Daisy describes this moment as a lesson about the world’s “sharp edges” (57). Here, again, Daisy uses silence to represent a lesson. “She stops talking to my father. My mother, that is” (58). This comes to be the power and magic her mother possesses. “She is angry and afraid, not so much of my father... but of knowing there is not other place for us to go” (58). Here is a woman, who knows what happened, but only demonstrates this knowledge with her silence. The one

that shapes Daisy's perspective though, is a different woman. "I hate her immediately. She is too happy. Too unafraid" (58). This is the woman that shapes her disbelief in "the women who know." Despite being someone framed as "knowing," young scathed Daisy is betrayed by her: "Grinning, the woman begins in Spanish, 'you have to be a good girl with your father. You have to be quiet and not bother him.' My breath leaves...But my mother is nearby, and she is silent and so am I. The words flood me then: this woman knows nothing" (58). This moment holds such significance for Daisy she returns to it: "I am in my thirties now, and she is upset that I have asked her about this time in our lives...When I ask for more details, my mother hesitates, as if she is opening the door of a house she does not want to visit" (59). Again, the silence of her mother is used to teach a lesson. She uses it in response to Daisy as if to say, "this door is shut."

One of the most distinct motifs present in this chapter is "the power of naming." For Daisy, "[t]here is a peculiar power to naming a person." (56) It is part of Spanish speaking to name someone. Hernández makes this cultural note to explain the elusive nature of the "women who read cards" (56). They remain undefined and one's who go by many names and also none at all: "It is impossible to put under a microscope a group of women who have no central authority, who protect themselves by not naming themselves..." (59). Being a child of two words, Daisy searches in books trying to capture what exactly these women "know" and how they "know" it. "...the word *knowledge* means to identify, to recognize. It is taken for granted that knowledge is information based on observation..." (61). In this sterile quick epistemological exploration of the word *knowledge*, Hernández asks larger questions. "I want knowledge



that can be... typed up, indexed... Here's how you know if the girl goes to college.

Here's how you know if she made her father beat her up. Here's how you know if another woman knows or doesn't know..." (61). Daisy's solution to the unknown is to find the knowledge. However, her culture and her parents do not categorize "knowing" in the same way. They do not name *knowledge* in the same ways Daisy has been taught to.

"My mother... this is what she knows: cups of water talk" (61). These *vasitos de agua* fill their house because "[t]hey ferry messages between us and the *santos* and the dead. They carry our prayers, our *deseos*, our fears" (61). The vessels that carry "prayers, *deseos*, and fears" (61) are important in a household that recognizes "any little good you have someone else covets" (60). A cultural perspective is explained in the Spanish word *envidia*. It is their belief that to have envy is to be ungrateful. Hernández juxtaposes their cultural practice of avoiding *envidia* with the foolishness of the American Dream: "No one here can afford to believe in dreaming, in planning, in the pursuit of happiness" (60). Instead, the practice is to place cups of water to carry those thoughts.

Through the use of water, more lessons come to young Daisy. At age "six or seven" (61), following a bath, her mother pours a "bucket of warm water filled with cologne and the petals of white carnations" (61). When young Daisy protests, her mother explains, "It's to get rid of *las malas energías*" (62) as she was told by "a woman who knows" (62). What's most important in this *cuento* is not the practice of purification and cleansing but rather the blooming of faith. Here, young Daisy begins to have hope and faith that the demons she sees in her father, in the world around her, in herself, can be cleansed and controlled. "...for a time, it was only my father and me, the two of us with

our large eyes, our thick, unruly hair, our quick and stubborn tempers.” While he is the abuser in this story, he is also the protector. Daisy has to negotiate the balance between her mother and her father, just as she does her cultures and two languages. “The women who know never tell us to leave or to make demands. They accept that we are trapped in cages, bound to this man, this country, these factories” (63). Again, Daisy is forced to accept and reconcile the limits of her experience.

“A Cup of Water Under My Bed” becomes the chapter that Daisy develops her understanding of resistance over the things she was once powerless over. “The nightmares begin around the time I am sixteen or seventeen” (63). Here, teenage Daisy becomes victim to “the dead” because “they are sneaking into [her] dreams at night” (63). Unlike other *remedios*, this one comes from her mother. “The cup is short and fat and made of glass, and is waiting there underneath the bed like a new friend” (64). Despite having the same sorts of dreams the night after she discovers the cup, she explains “everything... has changed, because when I slide out of bed and kneel... and see the cup, I do feel better. I have some power” (64). This is the young Daisy’s moment of faith. Trust that the cup, if properly faced directly under her bed, like that of the one placed under her mother’s pillow, will capture whatever is crowding her dreams at night.

Yet, as she grows older, Daisy still is resistant to the faith that has been blooming. “I had expected...I would be done with the women...It was my parents and my auntie who needed the cups of water and the *cartas*... I had better things in life” (66). Again, here, Daisy is negotiating her different worlds. As she comes to value English over Spanish, she also values Western practices over her family’s cultural beliefs. “Most important,

though, I had a therapist,” she writes, explaining the practice of therapy with the same criticism as many folks would describe Santería: “I walk into the office of a nice Japanese American woman who has an iPhone and has studied dead white men, the unconscious, and the id... At the end of fifty minutes, I have a sheet of paper with words on it. It is helpful, but somehow, it is not enough” (67). The emptiness left in adult and independent Daisy demonstrates the same frustration and confusion young Daisy had when “the women who knew” betrayed her. It isn’t until she finally visits a *santera* as an adult that she is able to release her doubts. “It was not knowledge I was seeking, not a definitive version of the truth, but rather the solace of a woman’s words” (69). This is the moment Hernández comes to an understanding. “Sometimes now when I think about the women my mother called on, I consider how they may have helped her to feel less alone in this world” (69). She begins to let go of the judgments and criticisms she previously made of the women in her life who sought “the women who know.” She comes to understand and remember that moment she felt like she had some power, and this is what calling on those women comes to represent.

Qué India: Queer Colombian Cubana Lessons on Transgressing Culture, Religion, and Politics of Desire

While Hernández’s part one could be framed as a reflection on the early parts of her life and the lessons she learned in order to be successful in her family, schooling, writing, and the United States, part two examines the consequences (social, political, material, spiritual) of her many transgressions as a queer, bisexual, Colombian-Cuban American woman in her family. *Even If I Kiss a Woman* reflects on Hernández’s lessons

on love, sex, and the abuse that exists in those same places. *Queer Narratives* focuses on her negotiations of her sexuality as well as the consequences of transgressing constructions of gender. The final chapter in this section, *Qué India* complicates Hernández's relationship with politeness, belonging, and class while also interrogating the racial constructions of indigeneity. Together, the three chapters make up the part of the memoir that begins to break down the institutions of power built up by young Daisy and her family in the first part of the novel.

A deep unpacking of her familial understandings of romance, love and sex, *Even If I Kiss A Woman* still centers on the themes from the first part of the memoir: mother/daughter relations, the power of language and silence, loving women, and the hurt that comes with some types of love. From “twisted nursery rhymes” (73) told to her by the women in her family from the kitchen she is taught about the shortcomings of Colombian men: “Colombian men get drunk, beat their wives, cheat on their wives, and never earn enough money” (73). The warnings continue into mistresses, bastard children, lying, stealing and bitter wives. This is the bottom line rule in her household. “The women in my family... married men with dark eyes and *papeles*, whose wallets had Social Security cards” (74). With these lessons follows the beginning of Daisy's romantic transgressions: “At sixteen, I know to stay away from Colombian men. I know that Julio is Colombian” (74). While being fed the warnings about Colombian men, Daisy cannot help but fall into the foolishness that comes with teenage romance. “Julio talks to me in Spanish. *Querida, mi amor, mi cielo*. In Spanish, there are so many words to love a woman” (74). However, since he is a Colombian American, Julio is different than the

Colombian men her family warns her about. Despite her lessons, Daisy continues “dating Julio, however, because [she] is confident in the love of the women in [her] family. Despite their dictates about men, my mother and aunties teach me that our primary ties are to each other as women” (76). Here, perhaps, is the crux of this chapter. *Even If I Kiss A Woman* is a meditation on how to keep the love and ties to the women in her family even as Daisy comes to transgress the rules of womanhood.

The internal conflict of growing up as “their American brat” (76) comes with certain privileges. There are cultural transgressions that are permitted with American privilege, like dating Colombian men (77). It does not however extend to sex or romance. “The women in my family do not talk to me about sex, and women’s magazines do not mention poverty or race... Romance happens... on Spanish soap operas. Sex comes later” (77). In about three sentences, Hernández sums up her cultural, social, historical, political and personal background with sex and romance. What follows is shaped by Daisy’s American privilege. “... at the library, I read the truth about multiple orgasms... We that women can have sex... They can do it with different men and with each other... my final conclusion: sex is good” (77). Daisy has been taught that she is responsible for negotiating and translating her Cuban-Colombian cultures into her American one. As such, she recognizes she can do her own research and answer her own inquiries. This empowerment leads to the crucial transgression of this chapter: “*Estoy saliendo con mujeres*” (84).

The punishment of dating women comes the same as every other punishment in the memoir, with silence. “...The weight of that silence and how the absence of language

can feel like a death” (86). In a family constituted by the connection between women, “In a home run by women, I hold high court” (76). Yet, with this transgression, Daisy loses her throne. She commits an unspoken transgression and loses the lessons of her mother and tías. “This doesn’t happen in Colombia” (84) in reference to her liking women, or even “Tía Chuchi accuses me of trying to kill my mother” (85) because of the grief and drama that comes with having a transgressing child. Then there is “Tía Dora stops talking to me.” The women in her family hold the power and knowledge of the culture, and they wield it with fierce punishment. In this same chapter, there is an exploration on how loving women, was something she was always taught to do: “That is how I feel about loving women. They can dig into you and hold the insides of you, all bloodied and smell, in their hands.” (86) This sort of romantic understanding, the trust and intimacy only comes because Daisy has been loving women all her life.

Framed through a discussion with teenagers, “the more contact young people have with queers, the less likely they will be to hate us or worse...” (89). *Queer Narratives* navigates the story of both Gwen Araujo and her own search to be “normal.” Tracing the life, negotiation of gender performance, and death of Gwen Araujo this chapter resonates on several levels of criticism and reflection. Hernández uses this story, juxtaposed with her own navigation of her sexuality, to explain the small paths that lead to the violence Gwen experiences, and the ways the violence committed against her “would have been normal” (103). This chapter is a reflection on the transgressions made by Daisy as a bisexual and as a cis-woman dating a transgender man; it is a reflection on the consequences of transgressing gender.

“The Germans are probably responsible for the word *queer*, but I prefer to believe it was the Scots... “quier” was to be off-center, to traverse or move across, to be anything but straight and normal” (100). While this definition and epistemology sits towards the end of the chapter, it serves as a contradiction to the focus of the chapter. “I would like to be one, not a lesbian, but normal, the kind of story where you know what’s going to happen next” (93), she writes. This statement follows the moment Gwen admits to her mother that “she was a girl. She felt like a girl, not a boy” (92). Daisy search for normalcy follows Gwen’s own. “Normal. That’s why I keep coming back to Gwen. She wanted to be normal. We both did” (94). The process of recognizing herself as queer is not normal for Daisy, and silence is the tool she needs to fight against. The common tool of punishment that she knows is powerful and torturous. “...silence is a terrible war to wage against anyone, especially yourself” (94). When she shares “I’m attracted to girls,” (95), Daisy is suddenly able to feel “less alone” (95). This sense of loneliness or rather, the loss of a sense of belonging, continues to shape the chapter.

Whether it is the sense of belonging and privilege that comes with dating a transgender man who passes, Alejandro, or it is the pleas made by Gwen in her last moments—“No, please don’t, I have a family” (102)—this chapter complicates belonging: “I have family, I have a tribe, I belong. Gwen had a family who loved her, who expected her home” (102). The final paragraphs of the chapter focus on a conversation between Daisy and Alejandro: “I will tell him again that I don’t think he needs testosterone. he already has a beard and a deep voice. He can pass. The women in my family suspect nothing, neither does anyone else. “Enough,” he says. “Do it already.”

(103). At first glance, this closing to the chapter seems out of place. The reader reflects, what does a transgender male taking a shot of testosterone have to do with Gwen, or loneliness, or belonging. And then it clicks. Alejandro knows story after story like that of Gwens. He understands the consequences if someone “suspects” him as a gender transgressor. He needs to make sure he belongs.

Language, words, and voice are perhaps the most important characters in Daisy Hernández’s memoir. The manipulation, deployment, and utilization of language is the tool of punishment, pleasure, and power. “Tía Dora is not speaking to me now. I used the wrong words. I admitted to kissing a woman” (105). Tía Dora is the most forthright of her tías. She is proper and scolds Daisy for improper Spanish. “She cares about words, how they sit on the page and in our lives...” (105). She is the same tía frequently faced by the parasitic disease Chagas: “I want to tell my tía now that sexuality is not an illness. Love is not a parasite” (106). With her illness comes shame. She doesn’t want anyone to know her business or rather, her weakness. Tía Dora is all about upholding manners and “she wanted [Daisy] to be a lady” (109).

“Qué India” becomes the cultural and symbolic call to misbehaving. “Once a year, children here are told to think about Native Americans... But in Latin America, the natives are people you have to think about constantly, because when you behaving badly... you are immediately accused of being one of them: *qué india*” (108). As a transgressor, as a woman who kisses women, Daisy becomes the epitome of *qué india*, or even worse. “I had spoken. I was worse than *una india*” (110). While being punished for transgressing, Tía Dora still “had manners. She knew there were some things that should



not be said.” (110) Her response to Daisy’s transgression is to not speak of them, to not speak at all. “It is hard to say how one year of my auntie not speaking to me has become two and three....It has been seven years” (114-5).

In the closing of this chapter, Daisy starts to demonstrate her own mastery of silence. “We both act as though the seven years did not happen... so that it’s like we are speaking in another kind of silence...” (116). Here, their relationship falls back into the routine. They watch movies together, they laugh about the new man Daisy is dating. Yet, Daisy’s mastery comes forward when her Tía Dora “insists on watching the new Woody Allen movie” (116). The movie contains a scene where two women kiss. In response, Tía Dora cringes and gasps, insisting “that it’s horrible” (116). Patiently, cleverly, Daisy insists on her own opinions. What’s different here is the adult understanding of language. “I don’t try to convince her. I don’t go all *india* on her... I kiss her good-bye on the cheek the way you’re supposed to, all sweet and formal, like she taught me.” Here, Daisy remains composed and trusts that she is the one who understands now.

This section of the memoir seeks to lay out the consequences of being a transgressor in Daisy’s family. Additionally, through crafting these stories, Hernández lays out her forms of resistance to the stories she’s told, but her ways of survival. Constantly throughout the memoir Hernández is trying to find ways to take her family, culture, identities, and history with her. As such, she is crafting pathways for her readers to explore in their own negotiations and providing tools on how to do so.

And then I turn the page...: Finding Writing, Cuentos, and Faith

If the first chapter defined the power dynamics of language, and the second chapter crafts an understanding of gender and family, then the third chapter cultivates Hernández's understanding of spirituality and compassion. "The Candy Dish" is the chapter Hernández works to illuminate the understanding of her father. A reflection on the contradictions between being raised Catholic, attending church on Sundays, confession, Catholic school but having a father that is "godless" (38), the *cuentos* in the chapter ponder the dual practice of her family, Catholicism and Santería. A testimony to what is seen and unseen, what is secret, what gets hidden or exiled, how a man negotiates his fear, and the beginning ponderings of how Daisy comes to understand and know her family.

Beginning in the same practice of the rest of the novel, from the purview of young Daisy. "At the age of eight... I don't know why my parents hide the plate like this, but it doesn't bother me... I am used to it" (35). In this moment, the clay plate is simply the hidden place to get candy from. "The candy dish waits for me back there, a clay plate filled with M&Ms, Tootsie Rolls, and caramel candies" (35). The innocent acceptance of this practice fills the first pages of the chapter. "In my house, grown people hide candies and toys, even roosters" (36). The distinction here is also the (un)knowing that comes with eight year old Daisy. She doesn't understand what the candies, the "toys," or the rooster signify but she knows they are a part of her culture and family life. Even if she inquires, her family's response is limited. "If I ask her about the rooster or the candy dish, she will have the same answer: '*Son cosas de tu papá*'" (36). However, in this same

exploration of the trinkets her father collects and hides, there is an underlying lesson on secrecy, silence, and fear.

“A man who drinks too much is an open secret... Everyone has a father or uncle or cousin like that. There is nothing to hide. But there is plenty to see” (37). In these few sentences, Hernández packs anger and shame into her observation. Vision and what is un/seen become active motifs in this chapter. When exploring why her father doesn’t go to Church on Sundays, “Instead, Papi walks down Bergenline Avenue...Home by early evening, my father starts drinking...I sit nearby with a book in my hand and watch him.” (37) The drinking is part of his character; his practice and religion: “At first, it is ordinary...But the longer he’s in the ocean... His eyes lose focus. Then the waves come, furious and punishing, and he’s cursing at me, at my mother, at the kitchen sink” (37). While this chapter examines silence, religion, vision, and secrets, it also explores the alcoholism of her father: “My mother thinks the problem with my father is that his mother died when he was born. But I know the truth. The problem is my father’s godless” (38). Here, again from the purview of a young and innocent Daisy, an effort to understand what is going on with the tools at hand is made. “But his sin--- the one that is the worst--- is being far from god...” (38). It isn’t her father that she learns the truth about the candy dish, the rooster, or the toys. It is her Tía Chuchi, “my mother’s older sister... does not believe in secrets” (38). It is her who finally explains they are part of his religion when Daisy is 14.

While growing up, Daisy comes to accept and even embrace aspects of her father’s religion, Santería, but still distances herself from the practitioner. “I consider this

information and conclude that it is impossible. My father is not the kind of man who shares the quiet places of his soul with anyone, not a rock, not even my mother. The candy dish being a *santo*, on the other hand, makes sense” (39). Once she understands the significance of the candy dish, the toys, and the rooster she engages differently. “I look at the candy dish and greet it silently with the name Elegguá... Nothing happens, but when I leave the shed...I feel completely understood” (40). In this same instance, teenage Daisy is beginning to understand Santería and her father. “My father appears to me as a different man now, not one who drinks too much and works too often, but a man with a life of his own” (40). He is no longer the godless one, but a man who has tools for protection.

As she grows, so too does Daisy’s understanding of her different religions. “The year I turn fifteen I decide to leave Jesus... According to Ms. Langlieb, the stories from the Bible didn’t necessarily happen. “They are parables”... I march back to my church... I want an explanation because I have been reading my children’s Bible since I was seven and I believed every word of it” (42). This is a moment of critical perspective of what constitutes “truth” and “knowledge.” Daisy is suddenly presented with the idea of multiple “truths” and her response is simple. “I will not be part of a religion that lies to me” (42). In the same lessons she has always learned, there is consequence to her actions. “A friend’s cousin crashes his car into an electrical pole.... I wake up to find my body in the middle of the road...Both the arm and leg are broke, as if God had cut a diagonal line across my body” (42). Despite the reflection that somehow maybe she is being punished

by God for leaving, her stubbornness holds her. “I would rather be alone on a hill with the truth and broken *huesos* than to be told stories that are *mentiras*” (42).

What comes to follow is a lesson on how her family, and her father, deal with fear. “My father comes to the hospital once... I stare at the hospital wall while my father barks at me. My mother focuses on the floor; Tía Chuchi inspects the bedsheet. My father’s friend Pedro... searches for something out the window” (43). No one watches as bedridden and hospitalized Daisy is having “one of his rages” (43). While this is framed through anger, she learns later, that what she is witnessing is his hatred for anything that makes him afraid (43). “Yelling at us, about us, about the world, is the way he knows to talk about fear” (43). Again, this is a moment where vision and sight hold significance. The idea that shame and guilt fill the room as everyone witnesses, can testify, to her father’s rage is communicated by where they avoid looking. Despite her acceptance and embrace of Santería, Daisy still knows his behavior isn’t okay. “The sweetest part of my father is his candy dish” (43). She embraces her father’s faith, his beliefs and practices, but not his behavior.

The next *cuento* explores the practice of Santería. “December is the month of *visitas*” (44). Here, Daisy explores her family’s relationship with San Lázaro and even, “people like him--- Cubans, exiles” (46) and their common devotion. “The consensus is palpable: only a man who has suffered like this can know what we need and keep us safe from harm” (46). In this same exploration of Santería, Catholicism, San Lázaro, and Elegguá, Daisy is exploring the bounds of colonization and the politics of war that have shaped her family. In her father’s rages she names his anger towards Fidel Castro, and

names him as an exile. Unlike his mother who went through heartache and agony of leaving her mother, her father was exiled. This understanding and juxtaposition continues as she grows. “In graduate school, while researching colonial Cuba, I come across a book on Santería...” Once she is able to find the knowledge of her experiences written in books, once she reads the words that “are part of an oral language” (47) they become “important and real” (47). Here is another moment where Daisy has to negotiate her two worlds. The one she lived at home where her parents possess the power/knowledge, and the one she fought to be a part of, where she is learning to possess the power/knowledge written down. “If I could sum up the lives of people like me--- people whose parents don’t write books...” She explicitly notes herself as someone who finds the “truths” she has heard all along finally pressed between pages, “I turn the page and come across a detailed passage describing the bananas and roses and coffee shipped... which begins to explain what my mother and Tía Chuchi mean when they say they came here for work” (47). Her reading brings her back to her father. “I read more in books in more libraries and learn that my father and my mother are protecting us with a divine army” (48). And this is how she finds space for her father. When she realizing all along that he has been there.

“This is our home: Jesus and his chest cut open in the living room, a candy dish in the basement, a man with open sores on the kitchen table, and that rooster, always that tin rooster with grey eyes, way above our heads in the kitchen, a constant companion” (46). This simple contradiction shapes the perspective Daisy holds in the world. Her home is comprised of colonial Catholic symbols like that of Jesus and also of the stories of

resistance she reads about in books in many libraries practiced in the form of Santería. “...in the end, you realize that it was you who had to wait. It was your own heart you couldn’t barge into” (49). Following this recognition, this self reflection of Daisy’s, the next *cuentos* are moments where she witnesses the practice. “This is his time to make a request and share his feelings. I stare at the floor... I am embarrassed. My father, as far as I know, has never been told to discuss his feelings” (51). Her perspective of her father evolves in this moment of practice. The silence between them is packed with being seen. Daisy is witness to her father being “someone’s son. His voice is tender, *suavecito*, earnest even” (51). Following this interaction, her values come up against her experiences. “As much as I hate to admit it, books have limitations” (52). Following the exchange and witnessing of her father’s practice, her father’s faith, Daisy is forced to reckon with what she knows, including her understanding of her father. “I don’t even know if I believe in this because it is real... or if any of that matters... It’s similar to my relationship with my father. I can’t jump into forgiveness... Forgiveness and faith are like writing a story. They take time, effort, revisions” (52). The chapter closes with Daisy comparing her father, his faith, and her forgiveness of his transgressions with her greatest love, writing.

There is a generation of workers in the United States, whether they be immigrants, Cuban exiles, refugees or first-generation Americans they live in this country equipped with their skills and knowledge, but what’s most valuable is their ability to labor, their hands and body become their primary tool for survival. *My Father’s Hands* is a chapter meditating on the labor society values in Daisy’s world. “Parts of my father’s

hands are dead.” She explains that the skin hardened as a form of protection from the harsh chemicals and labor they suffered through. “It is a beautiful and unforgiving landscape, as after a hurricane when trees are uprooted... I don’t know why we return, what pushes us to look for meaning in places defined by loss...” (135). This imagery comes to serve as an understanding Daisy crafts of her father. A hurricane, defined by loss that is beautiful and unforgiving, hardened for protection.

“My father doesn’t want to be a farmer like his uncle and cousins... He wants more. He wants to be on the side that wins” (135-6). After choosing the side of the government that promised more, “he fights against Fidel Castro. By virtue of his birth, of his family’s poverty, my father is on the wrong side” (136). It is in 1961 that he leaves Cuba. From here “he settles into factory work in New Jersey and marries my mother. He adopts the uniform of poor immigrants...” (136). During this era, post WWII but right before NAFTA, the factory work is strong. However, “[i]n the late eighties, the world begins to shift...” (137). The world of textiles and factory workers in the United States begins to be outsourced. What’s different though, is Daisy’s family, unlike other Americans, is directly affected by this shift. “While my father and Mami and Tía Chuchi begin to collect unemployment, I am in high school, learning from school teachers and textbooks that Americans are trying to keep up with a family named the Joneses” (140). In this summary and juxtaposition, Daisy subversively frames her familial experience as un-American. “In our part of the world, no one is keeping up” (140). This perspective takes hold and serves as a reminder to Daisy as she grows and negotiates her many worlds.



The *cuento* that serves as most influential in this chapter is as follows. “There are many stages of development for a child who translates...Finally after years of interpretation, you are trusted with paper. The final act: translation... We repeat this exercise, my father and I, over the years.” This trust and pressure put onto a child who translates isn’t possible to measure. Despite this process being normalized. The important part of the *cuento* though is still to come. “When someone asks my father how he is doing, he looks at his hands... His answer is always the same, “*Ahí caballero, en la misma lucha.*” When I ask him what it means you are in the same *lucha*, my father says it means you are doing the same old thing” (144). However, this is not the case. It isn’t until years later that Daisy hears the word again: *lucha*. “The word means struggle...” (144). In this moment, her understanding of her father shifts, the interpretation is different. “It’s hard to explain how someone translates a word and your understanding of your family and your history and everything that’s come before turns around...” (144). This is the life of a child who translates.

The closing of the chapter is a moment of resolve in the story line. Daisy is finally making connections to where she is and how her father led her there. When you write, no matter the medium, you use your hands. “Sometimes on the weekends, I wake up in the dark, dress silently, and drive my father to work despite his protests... It is in those moments that I doubt myself, that I wonder if arranging words on a computer screen... makes any difference, if that is the best I can do with my own hands” (146). She begins to connect her skill, her gift even, of writing with making everything else possible. “Writing is how I learn to love my father and where I come from. Writing is how I leave him and

also how I take him with me” (147). The final sentences of the chapter though capture the importance of her father, “He has character,” the teacher says..” (147). Receiving acknowledgement from someone else, having someone see the blurry photo of her father’s hands and recognize his character bridges his labor and hurricane story with the one she is writing.

Tú piensas que a mí me gusta mi trabajo?

The final part of Daisy Hernández’s *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* brings the social and political definitions from part one, the transgressions of part two, and frames them with acceptance and her recognition of her privileges in part three. An interrogation of the politics of class, debt, stealing, hunger, winning, and the privilege it takes to say “no,” part three serves as Hernández’s critical investigation into herself and the constructions of being first generation, queer, and the politics of gender. Using symbols like “the street children” who in Spanish are classified differently, *gamines*, “a boy who steals” (125).

Fear and shame become major players in “Only Ricos Have Credit.” This chapter explores constructions of debt, politics of class, and explores the complicated nature of access and privilege when you come from a first generation Cuban-Colombian household. First, it is learning to manage debt when in order to belong in a middle-class circle includes traveling to Europe. For her parents, traveling to England is exactly what they worked so hard for. “She knows it’s a good place. It’s like here” (127). The definition of poverty is different when you come from a war torn country like Colombia, or you are a Cuban exile. “Children have *camitas* and *leche*, and they don’t wake up in

the middle of the night with hurting bellies or having to steal” (127). Being hungry or homeless in the United States is not the same (127).

After years of navigating middle-class acceptance using credit cards, Daisy finally snaps. “I pull every single credit card from my wallet and throw them in the freezer” (129). Because after all this time “all these curves and slants on the page belong to a language I am failing to learn” (128). Mostly importantly though, her family doesn’t understand. The perspectives are different. As she begins learning to manage her debt, she goes 3 days without a phone. A simple, common experience in people’s lives, but not her family. For them, “[n]ot being able to pay a bill in my family means a person is close to financial ruin, about to apply for welfare, or, worse, about to be thrown out of their home and forced to live on the street like *gamins*” (133). This long, dramatic sentence sums of the connections and stark difference in poverty Daisy and her middle-class American friends know and the poverty her family does. To have debt, or to owe anyone is to be close to financial ruin. This is a fear Daisy comes to recognize she doesn’t possess. She’s never feared this in the ways her family has. This is her privilege.

*Blackout* is about finding humility, arguing against memory, finding the white man’s “hierarchy of pain” (154), and the privilege of saying “no.” A detailed reflection on her years spent as an intern and reporter for the *New York Times*, being a woman of color in a primarily white industry comes with many discoveries. Whether it is grappling with her imposter syndrome, the struggle of having a racist supervisor, the sensation of “making it,” and finally being brave enough to say, “I don’t know” (171), this chapter serves as an

embodiment of all the privileges her family wanted for her and also, the independence to choose her own path.

Hernández is confronted time and time again with a battle all her own. “...For the first time I met someone who may be responsible for the murders of many people, and I asked him a polite question” (156). In her family, it is a privilege to be in the spaces she exists in. When she makes it, it is as it has always been, about more than just her. It is about “us,” because “people like me, from the community I come from, we don’t just get to work at the *New York Times*... I have to say yes, yes, and yes again.” (159) After several incidents of blatant racism, Daisy’s father asks her about work and she admits she isn’t liking it (163). His response, after some time, “Do you think I like my work? I don’t like my work. Your mother doesn’t like hers either” (163). This is the contrast of worlds Daisy lives in: one with the pressure to make it for the entire community, and another where in order to “make it,” she has to betray her community. Her internal negotiation guides her readers through her decision making, “...it begins to seem to me that things are not going to turn out as people said they would...I need time to find words for what I am seeing, for the grief and the killings, for my confusion, for the people who wake up each day and help to keep a hierarchy in place because they are afraid.” (171) And this is the moment she decides to leave the *New York Times*.

### Después

After. The final piece in her memoir, Hernández uses these pages to tie up the loose strings in her memoir. “In Spanish, however, the word is *desbaratar*... Not taking away, but taking apart. it is what I am doing here right now, what I have been doing in all

the pages before. I have the story, I am turning it inside out... so I can put it back together again the way I want, the way that makes sense now.” (173) In this chapter, all of the motifs and symbols come back to tie up the story. Daisy is now following in the footsteps of her mother, leaving her. (174) In her new home, Daisy has a candle for Elegguá, she lives in California now. The language of the *fabricas* still covers the pages of this chapter. “Some stitches cannot be undone. After I left, we unraveled, my family and me.” (177) And further, with the loss of Tía Dora, The Virgin Mary returns. “*Santa María, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros...*giving my auntie over to a mother we hoped was waiting in the sky.” (178) And even the last lines of the chapter, after everything, what matters most to Hernández is us. “It was about us.” (181) Finally, grounding her memoir, as she has all throughout, in her community, and in the idea that she carries them with her in her writing.

### Conclusion

While the fundamental work of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* is done in the detailed imagery and symbols of the text, Hernández uses representation, symbolism, language, genre, and identity to challenge social constructions of first generation Americans, Queer People, heteronormativity, and several institutions of power. In every *cuento*, Hernández highlights the significant influence of United States’ politics on her family and the people in her community. Additionally, as she negotiates the politics of being “a child who translates,” (141) she is also negotiating a politics of resistance and survival. “Over and

over again, this truth: Writing is how I leave my family and how I take them with me.”

(179) Through battling the politics of language in living between Spanish and English, through becoming the one who makes it or the representation of success in her community, through Elegguá and The Virgin Mary, through testimony and memory, and through negotiating her queer, Cuban-Colombian American, English as a Second Language, New Jersey raised self, Daisy Hernández crafts a memoir reflective of her own identities interwoven with her communities. Through writing in autohistoria-teoría Hernández crafts pathways for her readers to expand and complicate their understandings of themselves, their communities, and the identity ecology in *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*. After reading this text, regardless of their positionality, readers will have a shifted perspective of language, silence, loss, power, gender, love, resistance and survival and they will have tools to survive and resist the hegemonic stories they are told.

## CHAPTER 3: (RE)CRAFTING SALVATION: ALTERNATIVE TO WHAT?

### Introduction

Drawing from the refuge of finding a band that made her feel both “alive and in love,” (41) Cristy C. Road’s memoir *Spit & Passion* traces her pre-teen adolence from age 11 to almost 13. This journey negotiates a path of fear, anger and isolation that often comes with being a Gemini into a road of salvation. Using the powerful tools of reinvention, reconstruction and creation, Road’s autographic exploration of punk rock, Greenday, gender, Cubana culture, Jesus Christ’s Political Agenda (25), and finding salvation in the closet provides tools for survival and, more importantly, existence. Engaging with themes of silence, reinvention, and creativity, *Spit & Passion* explores Cristy C. Road’s identity ecology’s influential pulls of 1990s pop punk rock, Cuban Catholicism, conservative constructions of gender, culture, and class. The most important and powerful question this memoir regarding identity, self, community, culture, history... What reality am I creating of my own? (121)

Framed using lyrics from Cristy’s cherished Greenday, all six chapters of *Spit & Passion* dissect and transform status quo expectations she is asked to take up during her pre-teen adolescence. Adopting the same themes of the text, this chapter examines Road’s process of “unbecoming and unbeing” (Del Rio Gabiola 67) as a form of enacting her punk, queer, Cuban-American, artist identity. Beyond a process of enactment, *Spit &*

*Passion* also serves as Road's "undertaking" of a "kind of historical salvage project" (Laflen 217) for her "queer generation." (Road 111) As such, while *Spit & Passion* serves as a memoir and autographic articulating and depicting the experience of her own identity, the text also serves as a pathway for others to follow.

#### Fuck the Government: You Should Listen to Punk Rock

Perhaps the most influential theme of *Spit & Passion* and the crafting of the memoir itself, the *punk rock aesthetic* of the 1990s is both the savior, praxis, and theory behind pre-teen Cristy's survival. What is most powerful about this aesthetic is the way it feeds into the survival mechanisms and transformation work Cristy C. Road crafts in *Spit & Passion*, helping enact autohistoria-teoría. Adopting the anarcha-feminist philosophy<sup>16</sup> of the California Bay Area punk scene, *Spit & Passion* calls into question the absence of diverse representation and identities while also being "suspicious about the nature of historical knowledge" (LaFlen 218) and therefore suspicious of the United States government's contribution to this silencing and homogenization. "I knew what punk rock was. I was actually obsessed with the idea that these "punks" trolled about the planet questioning the status quo." (Road 34) At the early age of 4 years old (34) Cristy is first introduced to the idea that somewhere in the world there was music "so important, the punks would risk arrest for the sake of playing a show." (34) Adopting this same

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<sup>16</sup> Anarcha-Feminist Philosophy- See Derric Shannon's 2009 "Articulating a Contemporary Anarcha-Feminism"



perspective, punk rock music becomes “the process of reinvention” (50) Cristy finds herself in after finding Green Day, and thereby herself. (51)

What serves as most incredible in this *punk rock aesthetic* though is the acceptance and deployment of anger. Constantly, Road depicts the silencing and isolating experience of Cristy. These cause a deep seeded anger that becomes integral to Cristy’s identity. “I was angry but alive on the surface.” (13) With the privilege of autographic, the reader is able to accept and follow Cristy’s rage and emotional turmoil as easy as moving across the page. “Carlito was the first person I was really fascinated by in junior high... Carlito swore I had a **problem**. So he told me I should listen to punk rock music. I believed I was part psycho so I asked him to lend me a few tapes.” (Road 40) Framed by Carlito’s perspective that Cristy had a problem, and more importantly the self acceptance that she does, Cristy discovers punk rock. This acceptance of the emotional, gruelling, turmoil and pain was the enactment of punk rock. Cristy’s love and affinity for GreenDay helps her develop “self-assurance” (52) and to go through a process of “reclamation.” (55) Part of Green Day’s “perfected” art of “pop punk” (53) was based in “owning our self-loathing.” (53) Here, through Green Day, Cristy is able to note for the first time to herself that she is gay, and accept that “while humanity created existence, Green Day explained a life I wanted to create for myself-- an underworld were people like me could exist.” (55)

Strewn with moments of self-loathing and self-deprecation, *Spit & Passion* makes space for both self-acceptance and self-loathing. “Chachi was always caving letter into his skin. I was always making sarcastic self-deprecating jokes. We know there was more

to life. But for now we needed to bask in the pain that wasn't ready to go away." (115)

The embrace of self-loathing gives a form of voice and salvation for Cristy after having to contain herself and sort through the "inevitable insecurities that came with being a gay cuban girl in 1994." (60) The notion of both/and becomes one of the many tool of (re)construction and (re)creation and freedom. "I would try to be as free as I could, contained, but free- trying not to turn my soul and brain to dust." (61) Green Day, punk rock music, and (re)creation become Cristy's tools of survival and reflection. "I cut through my self-doubt as I cut out my favorite Green Day photos to decorate the outside of my scrapbook..." (124) The process of (re)creation or re-appropriation of images of Green Day becomes her form of "rebuild[ing] based on the assumed results of what may have been imaginary..." (127)

The final aspect Road adopts of the *punk rock* aesthetic is highlighted in the material crafting of *Spit & Passion*. As mentioned previously in this project, the text itself is depicted in a similar fashion to the riot grrl zine's of the 1990s *punk rock scene*. Similar to the theoretical (re)crafting and (re)appropriating work done in the memoir, the pages of a zine are traditionally (re)crafted materials. Rooted in anti-capitalist, anti-fascist praxis, *punk rock* and *Spit & Passion* and therein Cristy C. Road, work through a process of "excorporation," whereby she appropriates and combines diverse materials drawn from the dominant culture to develop her own contentious politics and to serve as a foundation for her identity." (Laflen 217) The material aesthetic of the text reflects this process. The text is published in all caps and often covers entire pages, forcing the reader to press against the binding to fulling picture the pages. Additionally, the artwork in the

autographic depict imagery of self-loathing, emotional, filthy (re)appropriated objects and cultural artifacts. Filled with images of “unbecoming and unbeing,” (Del Rio Gabiola 67) *Spit & Passion* emphasizes the “underworld” (55) feeling where anger, shame, and isolation are no more.

### Reconstructing La Virgen: Gender, Culture, & Family

Mentioned in the first pages of *Spit & Passion*, La Virgen De La Caridad and any other “religious icons throughout the house” (8) serve as symbols of reconstructing dominant narratives. “I think she *too* wanted to break herself off from the Evangelical herd.” (9) La Virgen becomes a representation not of who Cristy is being asked to become but rather, “the martyr our entire value system was based upon... Aware of the political allegations tied to Catholic symbolism, I liked to see it all as my family’s art and folklore, La Virgen was an heirloom... rather than a pioneer of the social revolution that shackled my organs.” (10) This is the first instance of (re)construction readers witness in *Spit & Passion*. Cristy frames this moment as a quest of demystification and (re)constructs the image and symbolism of La Virgen as a celebration. (10)

As she moves through the memoir, Road continues her process of (re)construction of La Virgen. “I liked to believe La Virgen de la Caridad didn’t mind my interest in punk or Queen, despite her flock’s interpretation of *The Devil’s Music*.” (35) Following this moment of reflection, Cristy takes the notion even further. “I decided La Virgen reconstructed the meaning of everything, dismantling the typical doctrines of her followers for the sake of my own salvation.” (35) In the same ways Green Day become idols and icons for Cristy, La Virgen becomes an “ideology” (35) that needs work and

deserves to be honored despite the ways her story “has already been destroyed by patriarchy.” (35)

Following suit, Cristy (re)constructs the historical tracings of her great-grandmother, Mimita’s value system. “I was sure that my family had created their own version... in order to fit their more conventional world.” (44) Again, using the tools of *punk rock* to hold onto the parts of her family, culture, and gender she “justified [her] existence through.” (47) Despite feeling “fucking silenced,” (47) Cristy is able to fight back by separating the love and sense of belonging she feels for her family and culture. “I liked to believe every member of my family had some kind of deep internal sympathy for homos... Because isn’t that what being a Cuban Exile is all about?” (44) She closes this exchange and reflection by explaining, “I wanted to believe there was a glitch in the things we were taught rather than the way we are... So I never fought back; I just sat back, scared and angry and holding onto myself...” (45) Again, through (re)appropriating power and meaning, Cristy is able to survive and exist in her identity.

The other place of her familial value system Cristy (re)constructs is her perspective of gender. As part of the (re)appropriation, anarcha-feminist, and *punk rock* values, Cristy declares junior high as the time best fit “to reclaim the idealistic image of “women”... I marched to school, going against the tide, in order to invent a new ideal...” (37) In doing so, she works to complicate the relationship she has with body image, her understanding of beauty, and the constructions of masculine/feminine. “I took pride in relating to the tough boys at school... I always felt like I was somewhere in the middle of men and women.” (28) Most concretely, we can see this (re)construction of gender in her

relationship with masturbation. “On a Spring Day in 1993, jerking off felt different, like a slide into a portal of semi-adulthood where I could define sexuality on my own...” (16) This was the first time she orgasmed, she “fell face first into an unparalleled state of euphoria.” (17) While doing the work of gender binary (re)construction, Cristy is also (re)constructing her desires. “The sensation was comforting but frightening when paired with the rest of reality...I wondered if sexual liberation was actually *unhealthy* or did they just want us to *think* that?” (18) Through her engagement with masturbation, Cristy is able to (re)construct her desires into a space where she embraces herself and “felt alive.” (18) What’s powerful here, as we delve further is not simply the relationship with her body and desires that is being (re)constructed but the value system within which she weighs them. “I didn’t have anybody to explain the unfathomable, unforgiving warmth of an orgasm... because of a guy named Jesus Christ, or rather, the governments that tainted his humanity.” (25) In this Cristy is even complicated her relationship with her Cuban cultural value of Christianity and the bible by framing it through the government's use of it as a “political agenda.” (25)

Once Cristy is able to take the martyr her family’s entire “value system was based on” (9) and (re)empower herself with La Virgen’s newfound ideology. The process of (re)construction becomes possible for several narratives in her life. The most significant one becomes the process of (re)construction of her family’s “evil values they were born into” (150) and the women she is raised by. For Cristy, this gives her the capacity “to be Cubana as much as I wanted to be Gay.” (150) This becomes part of her salvation of growing up “a gay cuban girl” (60) “despite the traditions of La Familia Cubana.” (14)

She holds onto the ways her family works to protect and provide for her despite their “casual homophobia” (29) and the ways “family values were now tainted with the learned concept of homophobia.” (29) Here, the autographic and *punk rock* value of (re)construction allows for pre-teen Cristy to hold onto her family, her culture, and her identity.

### Coming-Out-To-My-Soul: Radical Queer Cocoon of Filth

Amongst the process of reclamation of womanhood, during the start of 6th grade in September 1993, or what Cristy dubs “*The Beginning of the End of Childhood*,” (36) she focuses on “figuring out what my identity is going to be.” (36) As such, after scouring for some deep self-understanding, second semester of sixth grade comes bleakly. However, “I was...exhausted from all this coming-out-to-my-soul and finding-an-identity business. I didn’t expect this semester to be anything different. I expected... to occasionally hate myself while rummaging on the endless trek to find a voice, or at least some homos.” (38) This is the moment before she discovers Green Day. “I was transformed. I felt protect and warm-- alive and in love.” (41) At hearing the songs on *Dookie*, Cristy finds a community where she can exist.

As part of this, Green Day becomes a representation for her “potential reality.” (49) She sees them as “a diversion... I enjoyed sweaty, suffering people in an incandescent world where self-expression becomes some sort of a weapon...” (49) This is where Cristy’s salvation comes to take root. “Green Day felt real and tangible...Salvation... I had found myself.” (51) This shift is significant because it is no longer passive, Cristy has discovered salvation. “Deep inside, I still felt like *la rarita-- la*

tortillera. I could not be myself on a day-to-day basis...But I would try to be as free as I could..." (61) She was finally able to find a community where her desires, "punk rock, its political inclinations, and all the things I had read about that suddenly humanized my "alternative lifestyle." (64)

Otherness becomes a place of safety and acceptance but also compounds with social values of otherness as being deviant. While Cristy recognizes and is enticed by this sense of rebellion, she also senses the danger in it. "Alternative to what? Was scribbled on my geography class folder... it was the word usage. The use of "alternative" and its unified definition of otherness... Calling it an alternative lifestyle made it sound like this choice we made to live **differently.**" (65) Wrapped in this understanding, her deep seeded shame shows itself. While she has found the place that humanizes her desires and identity, she still questions her survival of "pre-teen enslavement." (70) However salvation comes in "the ability to sit with myself." (60) Indulgent in her *punk rock* self-loathing, "[i]nside that cocoon of filth where the only inhabitants were me and my questions about survival, I thought about the future... without checking my subconscious...I learned it was worth trying to self-righteously own the things that I wanted to love..." (71-2) With self-loathing and acceptance of her filth, Cristy starts to imagine "somewhere, out there, gay punks are not dying." (75)

#### (Re)Crafting My Closet: Finding Salvation at Home

Perhaps the entire point of Road's (re)imagination project can be summed up in her diverse portrayal of "the closet." Frequently used as the metaphor queer people hide their sexuality in, or the colloquialism for where skeletons (secrets) hide, the closet is not a

pleasant or safe place, traditionally. The first mention of her closet comes with the discussion of “casual homophobia.” (29) While the monster is not her sexuality, but rather the form of “the learned concept of homophobia” the closet becomes her refuge. “Because of this, homosexuality was doomed... So, I found my closet, with the truth sealed tight.” (29) Depicted as “Closed for Renovations,” the imagery of the closet takes hold of the same storyline, a place for her sexuality to be sealed tight. However, with the evolutionary process of Cristy and her identity, the depiction of her closet follows.

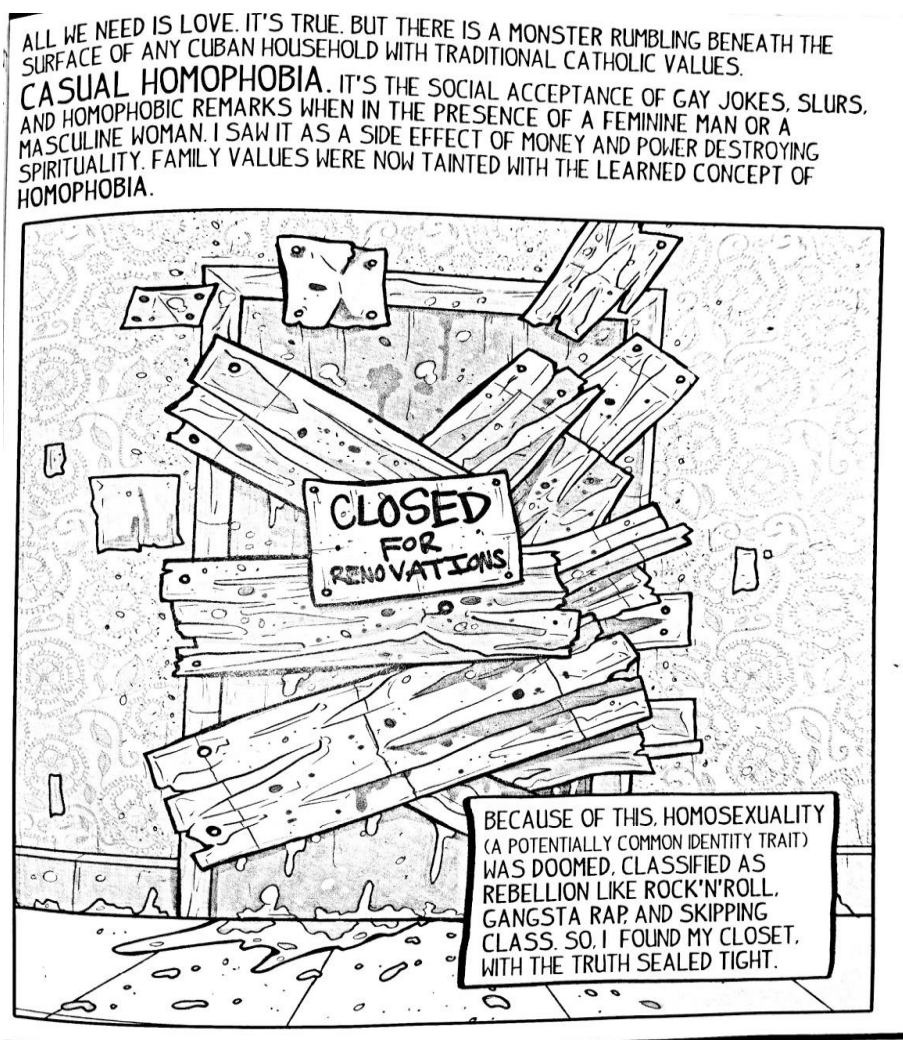


Figure 1



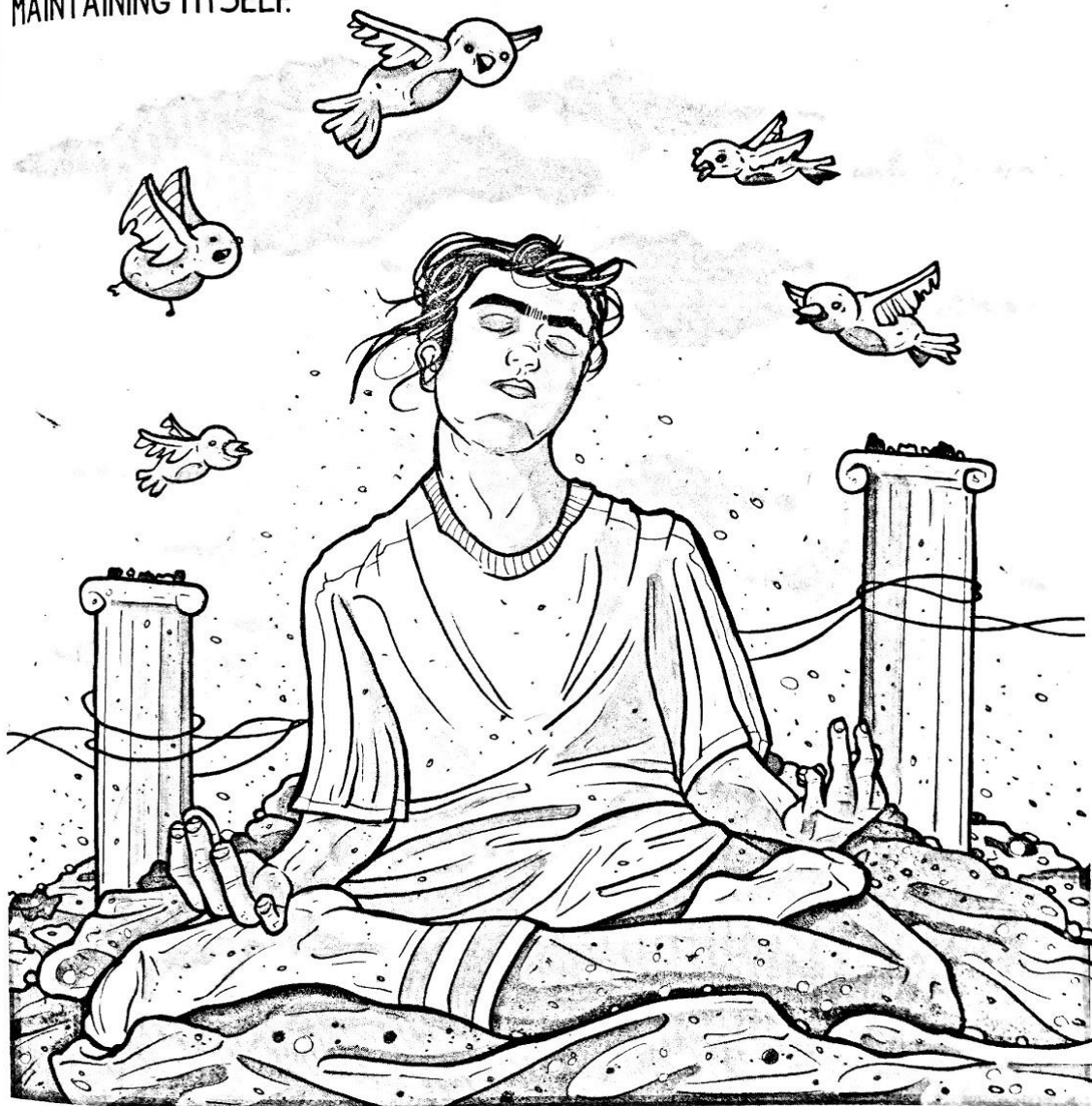
Chapter 3: *Skeletons Come to Life In My Closet*. Lyrics from the Green Day song *Coming Clean* frame the next rendition of Cristy's closet. This song is notably about Billie Joe Armstrong coming out as bisexual and helps frame the ways being closeted help construct feelings of loneliness and isolation in queer kids. "There was no way on earth that homosexuals could be powerful enough to anger an entire nation, because I for one usually felt fucking silenced... I tried to see through reality-- when I sat alone in my closet... I justified my existence..." (47) Cristy's experience of a place "which I could decorate and re-decorate as often as my serotonin needed..." (47) becomes a place of salvation and empowerment. The next imagery of her closet comes after the discovery of Green Day and "an identity." (60) Despite holding space for her insecurities and discomforts that come with "being a gay cuban girl in 1994," (60) Cristy is shown in the closet, angst across her face, surrounded by skeletons and several pieces of Green Day paraphernalia. References of freedom and survival cover the following page where she describes working to "meticulously mold my self-confidence." (61) Again, the evolution of her identity is followed by what is contained in her closet depictions.

"I believed in collective consciousness and the fact that I was not alone, as the media slowly exposed my alternative values. This made my closet feel safe... Just me, Green Day, Equal Rights Infomercials, and my convictions. I felt better about...the possibilities of the future..." (98) This is a moment where Cristy sets herself apart from her family values, religion, and culture by accepting the safety of her closet. "I was

starting to enjoy my identity...Billie Joe had written these songs that could assist me in uncovering every bit and piece of myself.” (99) her closet becomes a place where self-hate and wishing to be straight didn’t need to happen. “ I decided to become acquainted with the skeletons in my closet...I knew that the truth might make people angry, disturbed, or confused and I thought I could just hide somewhere until the truth felt safe.” (100)

For Cristy, her closet serves as the place of all of her inner turmoil and searching that comes with adolescence. “I had found this better version of myself in the arms of punk rock. My closet turned and turned as it skewed the acceptance I was feeling as a sexual being.” (120) With the inner turmoil of hormones and sexuality, her closet followed. She was experiencing “feelings that made me feel claustrophobic and alone.” (122) As Cristy navigates her feelings of anger, isolation, and claustrophobia the closet goes away. It isn’t until “losing friends brought a new level of alienation...I wondered if the distressed version of me did something wrong, something besides challenge the status quo because I was born into an identity that left me drained. Surrounded by my things, I felt like I was drowning in the back corner of my closet... the one everyone had forgotten about.” (142) This is perhaps the moment where creation becomes the action that moves Cristy towards survival and therein salvation. “I wrote enough to make sense of myself and feel as if I was doing *something* with my insanity-- something productive and useful, for the future.” (143)

MAYBE I COULD BE IN THE CLOSET UNTIL I WAS READY TO COME OUT? THE CLOSET COULD MANIFEST INTO A SANCTUARY, FOR THE SAKE OF UPROOTING THE THINGS I THOUGHT I LOST, LIKE MY ETHNICITY, MY CHILDHOOD, AND MY GIVEN SOUL. (I COULD REINVENT THEM) TREASURE THEM IN RETROSPECT BUT SMASH THEIR UNFORTUNATE IDIOSYNCRASIES WHEN NECESSARY. TRANSFORMING TRADITIONAL VALUES INTO RADICAL IDEAS WAS JUST PLAIN DIFFICULT, BECAUSE SALVAGING MY CULTURE FELT AS IMPORTANT AS MAINTAINING MYSELF.



## Figure 2

The above depiction of the closet includes self-acceptance, reinvention, and self-assurance. It is the entire process of the memoir coming to fruition. The final images of her closet are used as a space of survival and support for her identity. “Later, in my closet, the oceans and creatures would coalesce in support of my identity.” (155) Cristy crafts her closet in appropriate *punk rock* fashion, as an alternative counter cultural experience. “I learned to not attack myself... as I developed a sense of strength in the oasis I had created.” (156) She deploys the anti-capitalist, anti-fascist (re)construction tools she appropriated from *punk rock* and turns her closet into an “oasis” (156) of her own making. Through the metaphor of the closet, Cristy responds with a perfect (re)construction of her reality. She finds a way to face her fears of being a queer, Cuban-American girl growing up in the 1990s. The final pages of *Spit & Passion* reflect on the power of perspective, light, and time passing as a way to understand and face fears. “I thought the darkness was just plain frightening- but it seemed to make absolute sense when there was just the right amount of light.” (157) Again, through craft and (re)construction of darkness, Cristy is able to make sense of what she cannot control and still find salvation.

In crafting through a *punk rock aesthetic*, using (re)construction as a tool of resistance and survival, accepting her “cocoon of filth,” and finding (re)crafting as a form of salvation Cristy demonstrates a holistic acceptance and performance of her entire identity ecology. She finds a way to hold all conflicting and complicated aspects of her

identity without having to compromise her sense of self. Through writing an autobiographic memoir like *Spit & Passion*, Cristy C. Road is practicing autohistoria-teoría. As such, she does the work of creating space for individual queer latinx identities and a collective community identities.

## CHAPTER 4: IDEOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN THE CLASSROOM

### Introduction

The investigation takes up two questions: How does exposure to queer latinx Young Adult Fiction broaden or complicate students' understanding of those represented races/sexualities/complex identities? And how, through their memoirs, are Daisy Hernández and Cristy C. Road enacting their identities and therefore crafting space for new ideological perspectives? This segment of the project aims to explore the first question using a mixed methods qualitative assessment to measure, correlate, and predict the shifts occurring in readers' ideological perspectives (worldviews) and identity forming frameworks (understanding of self). As only one portion of this project, the findings of this assessment will help to examine theories of representation from the side of reception.

The primary motivator for this portion of my project was to discover whether or not one can measure the influence of literature. What a clever tool it would be for English Studies, to posit that we could, in fact, prove words are powerful. Beyond personal testimony, academic interrogation and examination, this project sought to prove the importance and value of experience as knowledge. The research issue: identity formations and ideological perspectives. As a compliment to the representational analysis done on *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion*, I aimed to collect data on the

actual reception of the texts by a group of readers who had never been exposed to the texts in a college-level course.

### Background and Methods

During the Spring semester of 2018, I worked with the English Department's English 360/560 Queer Women's Memoir class to recruit voluntary research participants. At the start of the course, after explaining some basic points of inquiry of my research and collecting volunteer participants, I sent out a 'pre-exposure' survey. This survey consisted of 20 questions that tracked demographics, previous reading history, and some of the ways each participant gathered their reading history. Additionally, using a 7-point scale, the survey examined how readers understood the ecology of identity (cultural, writerly, readerly), the intersections of identity, and specifically the queer latinx community.

In collecting a baseline of readers ideological perspectives and identity forming assumptions and then tracking the shifts after reading the texts, I am able to measure the changes in perspective. Further, because I used a before and after survey method I am able to correlate the ideological shift measured with the exposure to the particular texts they read. Additionally, through collecting research participants weekly reading responses, I am able to measure some of the ideological shifts occurring by doing a discourse analysis of their writing. In comparing readers ideological and identity forming perspectives before and after reading, I am able to reveal some of the ways the texts shape readers.

By using a qualitative mixed methods approach, this research shows comparative evidence of ideological shifts and identity forming knowledge related to exposure to queer latinx Literature. Additionally, the discursive evidence provides proof of the progression of ideological shifts and more complex identity forming knowledge occurring in readers throughout the process of exposure, as well as in the moment shifts in the readers exposure. The addition of the ethnographic assessment provides context to the readers immersion into the context of each novel. Further, because each participant is enrolled in the English 360/560 course, they were immersed into a community of critical analysis and engagement with Queer Women's Memoirs. By adding the ethnographic assessment, I provided my own personal experiences with the class community and some of my witnessed communal paradigm shifts, struggles, and even some rejections of the material.

My positionality within the classroom allowed a definite skew of "perspective" and "classroom values" in creating a classroom community. Being the Teaching Assistant, I was able to help influence and shape the topics discussed throughout the course and had input in each day's lesson plan. As such, I was highly involved in helping set the values of the community and enacting community member identity. Coming to this course, I had previously taken a version of it with the same instructor. I had my own perceptions of what purpose the coursework served, the classroom values and practices, and the point of inquiry the course occupied. In addition, due to the constraints of my project, prior to the start of the semester, the instructor and I reshaped the timeline and topics of the course to include a respectable timeline for my assessment. This had a great



impact on the classroom community and the community values established during the semester.

The strengths of this assessment are rooted in my privilege of occupying the classroom community with the students from the beginning. A huge piece of any paradigm shift comes from the end of the participant and their willingness/ability to make the ideological or identity forming move. In this case, I was able to help shape the theoretical frameworks of the course to best suit the shifts occurring in the texts. Additionally, in assessing ideological and identity forming shifts, a strength of this project is rooted in the groundwork done by the department(s) of English Studies and Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Humboldt State University. A huge portion of the course participants had previous knowledge of some of the theoretical frameworks this course explored, thus they were more ready to respond and indulge in the areas of exploration. This also stands as a limitation of the assessment. Since the participant pool was so highly influenced by the English and Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Departments, the full shifts occurring as a result from exposure to texts like that of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* are nearly impossible to accurately measure.

The qualitative assessment was done using four components: pre-exposure survey, ethnographic assessment, discourse analysis of participant's writing, and a post-exposure survey. The pre-exposure survey serves as baseline for the participants' identities, ideological perspectives, and understanding of queer latinx Youth experiences and culture. The questions were formulated using 7-point scale questions, True/False

Questions, and giving opportunity for elaboration on each question. This survey was given out within the first two weeks of Spring Semester 2018. The ethnographic assessment consisted of diligent note taking and review following each class session regarding classroom dynamics, discussion, and student responses/resistance to the material. For the discourse analysis, the students submitted weekly writing assignments, for the weeks during the reading of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion*, I was able to craft the questions. Focused primarily on excavating any discursive tensions occurring, this questions were framed using reflexive tools. The final component of the qualitative assessment was the post-exposure survey. Given to participants after both texts were read, only 4 people responded. This survey followed a similar format of the pre-exposure survey, this tool was crafted with the intention of measure the difference from pre-exposure and post-exposure. Additionally, the post-exposure survey contained four questions specifically addressing the participants response and perspective on *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* and the ways it influenced participants' understanding of their own identities, their current worldview, and their understanding of queer latinx Youth.

#### Findings: Conversations about Gender, Sexuality, Intersectionality, and Whiteness

From the start of the course, English 360/560 was a community that came in open and ready to grow. The context of the course means most of the students in the classroom were upper division level students who had already done some basic literary analysis in previous courses. Further, since the class itself has multiple fulfillments, many folks were there with intention. As part of the Multicultural Queer Studies pathways for Critical

Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies several students had discussed identity based literature. Additionally, the course is housed within the English Department and has minimum requirements before students can take the course. These multiple bureaucratic barriers had heavy influence on the framing of the class.

With the demographic of Humboldt State University and particularly the English Department, it was no surprise that of the participants 75% were female and 50% were White. Entering the coursework meant setting the guidelines and points of inquisition to a mostly White demographic on how to respectfully engage in diverse representations. Some of the theoretical framing the students read in the beginning of the course included pieces by Judith Butler's notion that "gender is performative," Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) among others. Further, with each component of the assessment came "working definitions" attached to give a baseline reference for participants to work from. Arguably this led to a communal discourse practice in explaining and engaging with race, gender, and sexuality.

Throughout the weeks of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion*, I was able to lead the lesson plans and class discussions. Primarily focused on providing tools for the students in how to engage with the texts critically following the disciplinary expectations of the class, most of the discussion was based on exploring common themes, motifs, and symbols within the text and attempting to decipher their meanings. Using the theoretical framework already provided by the instructor, the class themes for engaging and reading *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* are as follows: Queering the Queer Memoir,

Deconstructing Meanings of Literacy, Queer Brown Voices<sup>17</sup>, The Politics of Language, and Positionality.

Perhaps the most fruitful discussion surrounding *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* was in response to the politics of language and literacy at play within the memoir. Many folks, especially people within the English Department, experienced similar pressures to that of Daisy's own. Language became the tool within which the class was able to unpack the socially constructed binaries Hernández navigates and challenges in her memoir. One student, participant 12, wrote, "*A Cup of Water Under My Bed* represents the idea of duality. The fact that the author lives in and has a connection between two cultures makes her *a cup of water*." This same student went on to explain that it was Spanish and English that Hernández was connecting for her family.

Following the discussions during week 1 of reviewing *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*, the instructor and I crafted an assignment recommending reflexive work being done on each student's own positionality. Moving into the literature discussions, it was clear there were disagreements from students regarding understandings of racial hierarchy, white privilege, and the ways "one is structurally unfairly disadvantaged and advantaged by a social system based on white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and imperialism." This prompt was crafted in an attempt to get some of the white folks in the class to reflect

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<sup>17</sup> Queer Brown Voices refers to Vidal-Ortiz application: Queer Brown Voices takes inspiration from the possibilities of queer as a destabilizer of identities, or as an indicator of what is slippery, excessive, and thus uncontainable by identity frameworks (14).

on their privilege and how it shapes their perspective of literature, other people's experiences, and the world around them.

Moving into week 2 of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* allowed for a more in depth analysis of the proposed themes in week 1. Being a literature class, most of the classwork was framed around getting students to excavate textual evidence for the claims being made either by the lecture or the class discussion. Framed through a Huffington Post interview of Daisy Hernández discussing “writing the kind of book she needed when she was a kid,” this week asked students to do in-class writing and discussion of “How to Tell Your Story” and what story you needed or wanted to tell. The other aspect of the class discussion was based in examining how the second half (pp. 73-179) of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* engages with the previously proposed themes.

For the discussions around *Spit & Passion*, my contribution was primarily focused on translating. Many participants, including the instructor, were not familiar with the cultural references used to contextualize and form *Spit & Passion*. The work of this discussion focused on the five following questions about punk rock: What did you already know? Where did it come from? What does it mean? Who is it for? How do you do it/feel it/recognize it? As part of the discussion, I prompted the students to “Take 1 minute and write a list of what comes to mind when: someone mentions punk, you hear “punk” music, and you see “punk” clothing. The list created by the class discussion following this quick write is shown below.



Figure 3

In this discussion, and in their writing, students were able to incorporate the punk rock aesthetic *Cristy Road* adopts as a form of critical engagement with different aspects of identity. In her reading response, one student noted “Punk Rock is the cite of *Cristy*’s growth of understanding of her identity and her sexuality.” From here, this student, Participant 1 reflects “I used music, and space fantasies, and later fanfiction about space fantasies (and music) as a place to explore myself and create little worlds where people like me existed without any consequences...something about her understanding of her sexuality was very comforting to see represented.” This appreciation for *Cristy*’s embodiment of punk rock and queer helped craft positive reflections on *Spit & Passion*.

While the qualitative assessment was an option for every member of the course, only four students completed all components. Overall, the data collected was not statistically significant. Anecdotally, however, the results give room for further inquiry. The four students data is summarized below.

Participant 1. identifies as a Hispanic Female. Regarding her sexuality, after reading *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion*, shifted her signifier from “prefer not to state” to “bisexual.” Across the board, Participant 1 experienced a more diverse and complex representation of identities following exposure *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion*. Naming both texts in response to having witnessed representations of Latinx or Queer youth with multifaceted, complex identities within required readings, Participant 1 shifted from 4, “i think so” to explicitly naming the texts and listing 3 on the scale of agreement. Additionally, in reflecting on whether or not *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* contributed to her understanding of her own identity(ies), she responded “It reminded me of the traditions and machismos and the expectations family’s place on first generation scholars.”

Participant 5. A gender non binary pansexual at the start, Participant 5 shifts to identifying as queer post-exposure. While most of their responses follow suit with the rest of the class regarding exposure and understanding of diverse representations in literature, what Participant 5 highlights is the impact *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* have on their canonical understanding. Perhaps the most persuasive aspect of Participant 5’s response is in the naming of *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* as realistic representations of their race or ethnic identity and *Spit & Passion* as a

realistic representation of their gender identity. Finally, they name *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* as a realistic representation of their sexual orientation.

Participant 9. moves from a female who prefers not to state any other aspect of their identity to a person who prefers not to state any aspect of their identity following exposure to *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion*. While most of the responses are avoidant and unsure, Participant 9 admits this is a result of not having “figured out” different aspects of their identity, including their gender and sexuality. This is a moment where I recognize the vulnerability I am asking of my participants. To name themselves and their identities but also, to engage in self reflection in ways they often are not pushed to is a powerful and intense ask. However, while they “prefer not to state” several facets of their identity, Participant 9 admits “English 360 is the first class that has introduced this kind of literature to me...” While they say they haven’t really witnessed representations of Latinx or Queer youth with multifaceted, complex identities within required readings, they specifically note *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* as the single example. Finally, Participant 9 shares both *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* contributed to their understanding of their own identity(ies), whether “in a very personal and intimate way” or because they are able to “connect with the speaker because of the cultural references.”

Participant 14. The only White, Cisgender, Heterosexual male to respond to the qualitative assessment, Participant 14 serves as one of the most critical perspective of this assessment. While similar to most other respondents regarding exposure to diverse representations, Participant 14’s understanding of Race and gender as intersecting axes



shifts post-exposure. Moving from believing race can be understood independent of gender and sexuality to noting their intersectional influence to “form a complete identity” post-exposure, Participant 14 demonstrates a shift in understanding the nuances of diverse identities. What is most poignant in Participant 14’s response is not regarding their growing in understanding intersectional identities, but rather the reflection on whiteness. When asked if *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* contributed to his understanding of his own identity, not only did Participant 14 strongly agree, he noted “the way Hernández portrayed white folks taught me about my own identity.”

### Summary

In response to the research question: How does exposure to queer latinx Young Adult Fiction broaden or complicate students understanding of those represented races/sexualities/complex identities? This qualitative assessment demonstrated, on a small scale, that exposure to *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* specifically, helps many different types of folks understand their own identities and also the experiences of queer latinx Youth. Across the board participants agreed both texts “contributed to [their] current worldview.” Further, every response was in agreement that both texts contributed to their understanding of their own identities. While the nuances of this exposure are difficult to track without a more in depth analysis and controlled group, this assessment gives light to a point of inquiry not previously explored.

In response to “How close does the following statement come to your own viewpoint: Reading *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* contributed to my understanding of my own identity(ies)” on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being ‘very close’ and 7 being ‘not close at

all', 75% of responses were 'very close,' and 25% was 2, 'pretty close.' In response to the same question but regarding *Spit & Passion*, all responses were ranked from 1-3, between very and pretty close. The most important in relation to the points of inquiry of this project had similar positive response. Every participant marked 'true' in response to "A *Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* contribution to my current worldview." Quite directly, every participant who responded to all components of the assessment connected with the texts despite their range of identity(ies), felt the texts contributed to their understanding of their own identity(ies), contributed to their current worldview, and influenced their understandings of issues faced by queer latinx youth.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

### Suggestions for Further Research

While this project attempted to fill the gap in research by interweaving theories of representation from the site of reception (Literary, Cultural, Postcolonial Studies) and the side of production (Composition, Rhetoric, Writing, Creative Writing Studies), there were several limitations. The qualitative assessment followed appropriate and respected practices; however, the limited scope of participants does not provide enough statistical evidence to make the claims of the study valid. Thematically, every respondent agreed Daisy Hernández's *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and Cristy C. Road's *Spit & Passion* impacted their understandings of their own identities and their specific worldview. However, the capacity within which it was purely based on exposure to the texts and the small number of respondents calls for a more thorough investigation of these points of inquiry.

Regarding further research on this project I have several recommendations. First, I recommend from a qualitative assessment perspective to have more participants with a more robust methodological approach. Because my resources for qualitative assessment are limited, the scope of this research is constrained both in the data collection and in the participant-observation methods. This project would have better evidence for the hypothesis if more complex data was collected. Further, this project leaves opportunity

for deeper analysis of both the readers paradigm shifts and the expansion of the genres each other is creating. I would have also liked to explore a broader range of texts, including more contemporary one's like the 2017 *Juliet Takes a Breath* and the 2018 *The Poet X*. Finally, I think this research project would be better served with an extensive participant pool. If this project had a more random population of participants that was outside the limits of an English or Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies class there would be better proof of the paradigm shifts occurring as a result of exposure to queer latinx YA Literature.

As a result of the small number of responses, several of the questions did not produce remarkable findings. Some questions, particularly those asking how participants identified were interesting because after reading the texts several of the participants shifted in their responses. Other questions explored inquiring about the type of literature participants had been exposed to were unremarkable. With the course being part of several major requirements, there were a few students who had taken classes at Humboldt State University geared towards diverse representation in the texts, so several students listed a more diverse range than anticipated.

### Conclusion

Crafted with exquisite intention and patience, both Daisy Hernández's *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and Cristy C. Road's *Spit & Passion* employ unique forms of resistance to dominant paradigms of identity while also making room for others, like themselves, to exist. *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* uses the power of writing to find herself and bring

her family with her. Cristy C. Road uses the *punk rock aesthetic* found in Green Day to (re)craft notions of identity, gender, culture and community in *Spit & Passion*. Both authors, a queer Cuban-Colombian American Journalist from New Jersey and a Queer, Punk, Cubana Artist from Florida; carved out space for their own identities using the survival tools they learned along the way while also making space in their communities for people like themselves. Additionally, through their craft, they are providing tools of resistance for their readers while pushing the bounds of their identity forming and ideological perspectives.

Gloria Anzaldúa describes her text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* as “autohistoria-teoría”... Writers of autohistoria-teoría blend their cultural and personal biographies with memoir, history, storytelling, myth and other forms of theorizing. By doing so, they create interwoven individual and collective identities.” (Keating 9) It is of this same path that both Daisy Hernández and Cristy C. Road craft from. Through critical engagement and reflections on representation, symbolism, language, genre, and identity both authors illuminate the role each plays in shaping identity forming and ideological perspectives.

With the understanding that an *ecological perspective of identity* can be used as an analysis tool, these texts serve as exemplary sites. Each author crafts a holistic and interconnected approach to their understanding of their own identity. Further, both Daisy Hernández and Cristy C. Road examine and enact their identities across social, historical, spiritual, material and personal axes of performance and power. Each aspect of identity helps to situate the experiences crafted into the memoirs and allows for readers to further

understand the ways their identities shift and fluctuation, and the broader world around them. Most valuable to this project though, is the ways in which Daisy Hernández and Cristy C. Road intentionally perform their identities. In doing so, the primary research questions regarding the influential capacity of the texts is more readily accessible. As the findings show, Daisy Hernández's *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and Cristy C. Road's *Spit & Passion* impact readers' understanding of their own identity(ies), their worldview, and their understanding of queer latinx youth experiences.

Coming to this project, I wanted proof that my experience of desperately searching for representations of myself and my community wouldn't happen to others. I wanted to know how I could contribute to supporting the voices and stories that helped keep my head above water when I found them. With authors like Daisy Hernández and Cristy C. Road, who enact their diverse and complex ecology of identity through the craft of writing and literature, queer brown kids will be able to find their way home. Furthermore, the tools used in both *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion*, that are rooted in compassion and love for their cultural, family, and communities, make it possible to craft a world where a radical queer, punk, Latinx, Choctaw gender-non-binary kid can relate to literature, and maybe, just maybe, find salvation.

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## APPENDIX A

*A Cup of Water* Reader Response Assignment Prompts

1. Identify the central conflicts or tensions the narrator describes in section one. What are

the sources of these conflicts? What political critique does the narrator offer us to understand them?

- a. English vs. Spanish
- b. Catholicism vs. Santeria vs. Atheism
- c. American Dream vs. parents' dream vs. desire to stay true to her family and culture
- d. Violence against her family and culture vs. father's violence against her
- e. Hating her father's behavior vs. Loving her father
- f. Assimilation vs. hybrid cultural traditions vs. hybrid immigrant identity
- g. Faith vs. Skepticism
- h. Dominant society vs. Family vs. Feminism

2. Carla Trujillo, novelist, literary critic, and editor of *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our*

*Mothers Warned Us About* states that “women are the enforcers of cultural codes.” Where does *A Cup of Water* demonstrate this idea? How do Daisy's aunts, mother, and cousins uphold particular religious and cultural beliefs from Columbia? How do they also enforce U.S. dominant cultural beliefs?

3. Describe Daisy Hernandez's relationship with the English language. Describe Daisy

Hernandez's relationship with the Spanish language. How have her educational, social, familial, cultural, and professional experiences with each language shaped her relationships to and feelings about them? In what ways have these experiences added to the idea that language is a cultural regulator/enforcer?

4. How does religion influence Hernandez's identity? How does her relationship to religion and faith change as she explores and accepts the intersections of her identity—queer, Cubana, Colombiana, working class, etc.?

5. What does a “cup of water under my bed” represent in this memoir? What is its literal i.e. spiritual meaning? Its personal meaning to the narrator? Its meaning as a

literary symbol? Why do you think Hernandez the author chose it as her title? How does it interweave core themes of this book?

6. Examine how queerness is represented in this memoir. What are the different ways

queerness is defined and/or inhabited in the narrative? What specific challenges does the narrator face in navigating her queer desires? How does gender, culture, religion, language, and ethnicity inform the narrator's experiences of queer desire and oppression? What queer of color political critique does the text offer its readers in its discussion of queerness in relation to racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism?

7. In what ways is storytelling a central theme in this book? What does the narrator have to

tell us about the power of storytelling—to shape identity, politics, violence, desire? What meta-textual moments—passages about stories and storytelling that double as commentary on how to read this book—can you find? Explain what they want the reader to understand. Discuss the non-chronological sequencing of Hernandez's narrative. Pick one example of how the narrative moves back and forth in time, and explain what is gained by the non-chronological order.

8. How does the memoir represent Hernandez's experiences with racism? What kinds of

racism does she witness that are targeted at her as a brown woman? What kinds of racism does she witness that are targeted at other people and groups? What political analysis does the author provide for understanding racism? What models does the author provide to address racism—both in her own life and in the memoir as a work of art?

9. Write one discussion question that prompts us to try to understand some aspect of the book as a whole.

## APPENDIX B

## Spit and Passion Discussion Questions

- What do you think a “coming of age” narrative is? How does *Spit and Passion* fit into your definitions of the “coming of age” narrative? How does it diverge or subvert those definitions?
- What does the “closet” usually signify in literature/pop culture? What does the “closet” mean for Roads? How does Cristy C. Road use the “closet,” both metaphorically and physically, in her memoir?
- What is the role of Catholicism in Road’s understanding of identity? How does teenage Cristy feel about religion? How does the narrator of the memoir feel about religion in retrospect? Is religion a source of oppression for Roads? A source of freedom? Solace? Comfort? How does she reconcile the ideologies of Catholicism and her sexuality?
- How does Road engage with the genre of “memoir”? How does she engage with the genre of “graphic narrative”? How does her blending of these genres affect the way you read her story?

## Reader Response Assignment Day #1

1. Why is music important for Road, the author? In her memoir, how is music shown to shape her character’s identity? How does music shape her narrative, i.e. the writing? Does her relationship to music resonate with you and your experiences as an adolescent?
2. What is the role of Catholicism in Road’s (the author’s) understanding of identity?

How does teenage Cristy (the narrator) feel about religion? How does the narrator of the memoir feel about religion in retrospect? Is religion a source of oppression? A source of freedom? Solace? Comfort? How does the narrator reconcile the ideologies of Catholicism and her sexuality? 3. What does the “closet” usually signify in literature/pop culture? What does the “closet” mean for Road, the author? How does Road use the “closet,” both metaphorically and physically, in her memoir?

#### Reader Response Assignment Day #2

4. How would you define the “coming of age” narrative? How does *Spit and Passion* fit into your definition of the “coming of age” narrative? How does it diverge or subvert that definition? 5. How does Road, the author, engage with the genre of “memoir” or “lesbian memoir”?

How does she engage with the genre of “graphic narrative”? How does her blending of these genres affect the way you read her story? 6. How does Road, the author, present her queerness in writing and image? Is queerness integral to the narrative? To the narrator’s identity? What outside forces shape the narrator’s understanding of her sexuality?

## APPENDIX C

## Pre-Reading Survey

1. Participant ID
2. Gender ID: Female; Gender Non-Conforming/Non-binary; Male; Transgender; Prefer Not To State; Other\_\_\_\_\_
3. Racial/Ethnic Identity: American Indian or Alaskan; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Hispanic; Latina/o/x; Prefer Not To State; Two or More; White (Anglo, European); Unknown
4. Sexual Orientation: Bisexual; Gay; Heterosexual; Lesbian; Other; Pansexual; Prefer Not To State; Queer
5. Since the Start of High school and through college, I have read literature with characters that have the following identities: (Check all that apply)
  - a. European (British, French, German, etc.); Gay or Lesbian; Heterosexual; Hispanic; Latina/o/x; None of the Above; Prefer not to state; Queer; White (North American); Transgender or Gender Non-Binary; Other\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Please list the titles or names of character(s) that contained these representations:

The following questions are ranked on a scale of 1 to 7. 1 being Very Close and 7 Being Not Close At All



6. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I chose and sought out literature that contained representations of myself.
7. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I found representations of myself in the literature I was assigned to read.
8. True or False: I have read literature with realistic representations of my race or ethnic identity.
  - a. If true, which ones? If false, why not?
9. True or False: I have read literature with realistic representations of my gender identity.
  - a. If true, which ones? If false, why not?
10. True or False: I have read literature with realistic representations of my sexual orientation.
  - a. If true, which ones? If false, why not?

The following questions are ranked on a scale of 1 to 7. 1 being Very Close and 7 Being Not Close At All

11. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: Race can be understood independent of gender and sexual identity.
  - a. Please explain
12. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I am confident in my understanding of common issues experienced by Queer Latinx youth.
  - a. Please Explain

13. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: My identity(ies) are accurately portrayed within literature I have read.
- a. Please Explain
14. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I am familiar with stereotypes of Latinx and/or Queer communities.
- a. Please Explain
15. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I have witnessed representations of Latinx or Queer youth with multifaceted, complex identities within required reading.
- a. Please explain

## APPENDIX D

## Post-Reading Survey

1. Participant ID
2. Gender ID: Female; Gender Non-Conforming/Non-binary; Male; Transgender;  
Prefer Not To State; Other\_\_\_\_\_
3. Racial/Ethnic Identity: American Indian or Alaskan; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black  
or African American; Hispanic; Latina/o/x; Prefer Not To State; Two or More;  
White (Anglo, European); Unknown
4. Sexual Orientation: Bisexual; Gay; Heterosexual; Lesbian; Other; Pansexual;  
Prefer Not To State; Queer
5. Since the Start of High school and through college, I have read literature with  
characters that have the following identities: (Check all that apply)
  - a. European (British, French, German, etc.); Gay or Lesbian; Heterosexual;  
Hispanic; Latina/o/x; None of the Above; Prefer not to state; Queer; White  
(North American); Transgender or Gender Non-Binary; Other\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Please list the titles or names of character(s) that contained these  
representations:

The following questions are ranked on a scale of 1 to 7. 1 being Very Close and 7 Being  
Not Close At All

6. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I chose and sought out literature that contained representations of myself.
7. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I found representations of myself in the literature I was assigned to read.
8. True or False: I have read literature with realistic representations of my race or ethnic identity.
  - a. If true, which ones? If false, why not?
9. True or False: I have read literature with realistic representations of my gender identity.
  - a. If true, which ones? If false, why not?
10. True or False: I have read literature with realistic representations of my sexual orientation.
  - a. If true, which ones? If false, why not?

The following questions are ranked on a scale of 1 to 7. 1 being Very Close and 7 Being Not Close At All

11. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: Race can be understood independent of gender and sexual identity.
  - a. Please explain
12. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I am confident in my understanding of common issues experienced by Queer Latinx youth.
  - a. Please Explain

13. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: My identity(ies) are accurately portrayed within literature I have read.
- Please Explain
14. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I am familiar with stereotypes of Latinx and/or Queer communities.
- Please Explain
15. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: I have witnessed representations of Latinx or Queer youth with multifaceted, complex identities within required reading.
- Please explain
16. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: Reading *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* contributed to my understanding of my own identity(ies).
- Please Explain
17. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: Reading *Spit & Passion* contributed to my understandings of my own identity(ies).
- Please Explain
18. True or False: Reading both *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* contributed to my current worldview.
- Please explain

19. How close does the follow statement come to your own viewpoint: Reading both *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* and *Spit & Passion* influenced my understanding of the issues faced by queer latinx youth.
- a. Please Explain