

PACHUCA POWER: CENTERING THE CHICANA AS AN ACTOR

ON THE STAGE, IN THE STREETS,

AND ON THE PAGE

A Thesis

Presented

to the Faculty of

California State University Dominguez Hills

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Humanities

By

Nicole Celaya

Summer 2017

Copyright by

NICOLE CELAYA

2017

All Rights Reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
COPYRIGHT PAGE.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE PACHUCA ON THE STREETS.....	10
3. THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF THE PACHUCA ICON WITHIN THE CHICANO MOVEMENT.....	23
4. PACHUCA SILENCE IN <i>ZOOT SUIT</i>	35
5. PACHUCA POWER ON STAGE.....	50
6. CONCLUSION.....	68
WORKS CITED.....	72

ABSTRACT

The Pachuca was an influential figure who emerged in the 1940's as a female Mexican-American subject whose public visibility challenged the hegemonic patriarchal stereotypes, both in the home and on the streets, yet the authentic voices of Pachucas are systematically excluded from the dominant historical and cultural narrative. As an unfixed subject who represents a continual process of identity creation, she is an important public and private actor whose influence persisted as a social, cultural, and artistic source of strength and inspiration for Chicanas during the Chicano Movement and beyond. While plays like *Zoot Suit* perpetuate the silence and invisibility of the Pachuca, contemporary Chicana playwrights also continue to draw from her as a rich icon who can inform modern day Chicano theater and challenge such one-sided and limiting female representations.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Pachuco Style was an act in Life and his language a new creation. His will to be was an awesome force eluding all documentation ... The Pachuco was existential for he was an Actor in the streets both profane and reverential. It was the secret fantasy of every bato in or out of the Chicana to put on a Zoot Suit and play the Myth.
Luis Valdez

This opening quote by the character of El Pachuco in Luis Valdez's iconic and groundbreaking work, *Zoot Suit*, presents a clear picture of the importance of the Pachuco in Chicano identity, history, and culture. The Pachuco's emergence in the United States, particularly within the Southwest, coincided with the extremely nationalist and anti-communist climate of World War II. The decades of marginalization and oppression of Mexican-Americans, along with the newly available economic mobility created by the war industry, created fertile ground for the rise of an authentic, autonomous, and rebellious icon who embodied a new spirit of agency and ethnic pride. The Pachuco appropriated the negative images and stereotypes of Mexican-Americans in order to subvert the hegemonic order and reposition himself as a powerful agent of his own destiny. His language, dress, style, and public visibility challenged the white power structures that kept people of color in disadvantaged positions while also making

visible the struggles, dreams, and complexities of an entire community. His zoot suit, his “drapes,” signified his physical, mental, and social position outside of the dominant culture while also acting “as a symbol of belonging to the inner group. It is at once a sign of rebellion and a mark of belonging. It carries prestige” (McWilliams 219). The Pachuco as a mythological figure also ushered in a re-discovered consciousness of a pre-Columbian indigenous culture that rejected the supposed need for Chicano assimilation into the dominant American culture and paved the way for the Chicano nationalist movement that began in the 1960’s. And though at the time the Pachuco was considered a troublemaker and *callejero* (street-walker) by assimilationist Mexican-Americans who thought it best to “play by the rules” and avoid the Pachuco lifestyle at all costs, his life was “the secret fantasy” that gave rise to new Chicano expressions of identity, art, and culture.

As is evident by Valdez’s language, the realm of the Pachuco was a male-dominated space in which women were unwelcome transgressors of the proscribed gender order. Valdez’s “new creation” did not encompass the experiences of Mexican-American women who not only had to deal with the same racial and social oppression, but also had to contend with gender inequalities both within and outside of the Chicano community. She could not be a visible “Actor in the streets” as the streets were an exclusively male domain in which only men were able to explore their social and cultural identities; her identity existed only in relation to the men in her life who sought to control her body, actions, sexuality, will, and future. These cultural and social gender

norms eventually became “contradictions faced by women of Mexican descent in wartime Los Angeles” (Escobedo 71). The changing economic climate, spurred by the need for labor in the war industry, created a unique social environment in which women were also called to do their part for the “war effort,” which naturally led to a greater visibility and freedom both within and outside of the home. Because “women of Mexican descent...increasingly found that jobs in wartime industry were not only plentiful but also paid very well” (Escobedo 77), they quickly became contributing members of the family income, even at times becoming the sole breadwinners when the men in the household were called to serve in the war, a complete reversal of Mexican gender expectations in which women remained in the domestic sphere and their unpaid labor was taken for granted. This liminal space between new social freedoms and old cultural confinements was the womb that nurtured an extraordinary new icon. Ripe for emergence, the Pachuca birthed herself from these perfect conditions as a woman of means and independence who made her own money, who no longer had to seek permission to attend social events, and whose public visibility challenged the patriarchal constructs of gender that the Mexican culture imposed on her body.

This birthing was no easy task; as the Pachuca faced the same *callejera* stigmatization as her male counterpart, she was also assigned the sexual identity of a loose woman whose virtue was tainted and whose body both literally and figuratively transgressed the boundaries of proper female behavior. Her visibility on the streets was

a traitorous offense because she “fought like guys and would stand up to anybody’s provocation...the street was [her] turf” (Fregoso, “Re-Imagining” 75). The Pachuca’s disordering of the dominant gender norms threatened the family structure, thus causing her to be marginalized within her own family and community. In Rosa Linda Fregoso’s examination of the Pachuca and her influence on popular culture, she recounts her own experiences with these women as “the girls my mother warned me about” (“Re-Imagining” 73), which directly reflects the larger social and cultural sentiments of the Mexican-American community. Much like Fregoso, my own great-grandparents did their best to shelter my grandmother and great aunts from the Pachuca’s perceived negative influence, and my grandparents made sure to move my mother and my aunt out of the *barrio* of East Los Angeles and into the “suburbs” of Montebello in order to make sure they didn’t grow up like “the rest of those cholas.” Most Mexican-American women during World War II also did their best to distance themselves from the Pachuca lifestyle, hoping to be perceived as virtuous and productive members of the war effort who could assimilate and “improve the image of the Los Angeleno Mexican community” (Escobedo 54). But the Pachuca’s presence on the streets, in dance halls, and in the consciousness of the community signified a continued outsider status that challenged not only the patriarchal gender norms but also reminded the Mexican-American community of their own racialized identity. She was a constant reminder that the social identity of women and Mexicans was constructed by a hegemonic system that would

never position them as autonomous equals while also acting as a catalyst for the continued creation of an authentic social and cultural identity.

When analyzing the formation of the Pachuca's cultural identity, it is impossible to separate her from the circumstances and conditions that gave rise to her birth and required the transformation of her own gendered representation. The Pachuca is the first female Mexican-American "outsider" whose origin is deeply rooted in the opportunities provided by a confluence of historic, economic, and social events, yet these roots do not limit the Pachuca to a specific time or geography. She represents Fregoso's "subject in process" which "emphasizes...the concepts of *becoming*, within cultural identity, rather than of being, of *process* as opposed to structure" (*The Bronze Screen* 31). Her ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, as well as her appropriation of the male Pachuco style, indicate a "cultural identity [that] is dynamic and subject to historical, geographical, and political change" (Habell-Pallan 121). It is this very dynamism that makes the Pachuca an important icon who transcends time and place and who not only embodies the Chicano spirit of agency, resistance, and liberation, but also challenges the gendered limitations of the Chicano movement. Indeed, when looking at subsequent counter-culture movements within the Latina and Chicana community, her presence and influence are evident; she is the precursor of the female punker, the mother of the rebellious chola, the author of the high-haired homegirl. It is this adaptability and persistence that makes her a relevant and compelling icon for today's Chicana and Latina artists, yet her strength and

independence have been underestimated, devalued, and dismissed by most Chicano authors and scholars, both past and present.

As one of the pioneers of Chicano drama, Luis Valdez and his work during the 1960's and 70's focused on the racial and class oppression experienced by Chicanos, and by creating El Teatro Campesino, he "aimed to serve the interests of the Chicana/o communities whose needs and struggles were in no way addressed by the mainstream theater machinery characterized by elitism and commercialism" (Broyles-Gonzalez 165). His use of collaboration and the *rasquachi* aesthetic was founded on traditional Mexican performance techniques as well as indigenous Mayan and Aztec mythology, making the work of El Teatro Campesino an authentic mouthpiece for the Chicano community. The early years of El Teatro Campesino were a deeply creative time for the entire ensemble in which survival and struggle were not only represented on stage but also lived by each individual actor. Drama was established as an important tool for social change, yet as El Teatro Campesino was present in the fields, in the streets, and on the stage as a defining and positive force for the oppressed Chicano community, there was an obvious absence of strong female characters and representations. While female actors pushed for higher visibility and the opportunity to create substantive characters who incorporated the full range of the Chicana experience, Luis Valdez envisioned something very different for El Teatro Campesino that culminated in a massively popular, large scale production that brought his one-dimensional representations of women to a much larger audience.

Zoot Suit was a breakthrough success for El Teatro Campesino, receiving widespread acclaim and garnering massive popularity in the Western United States. As stated above, it represented the struggles of an entire community encapsulated in one specific and poignant historical event, but Valdez's portrayal of the Pachuca is indicative of the continued patriarchal oppression within a movement that was fighting for liberation. As the lives and stories of Pachucas were silenced and made invisible, so the feisty Pachuca character of Bertha is silenced by the play's protagonist: "HENRY: Shut your mouth, Bertha!" (Valdez 1.7) After this short exchange in which Bertha brags that she is "free as a bird" from Henry's clutches, she is never seen or heard from again for the rest of the play, even during the trial in which the girls involved in the Sleepy Lagoon incident were sentenced. This directly mirrors the experiences of the real women of Sleepy Lagoon who "were denied due process, incarcerated, and monitored by the state for years to come" (C. Ramirez 35). These women were housed in the infamously horrible Ventura School for Girls, some remaining there longer than their male counterparts in prison. In reality, while the experience of the boys involved in the Sleepy Lagoon trial garnered much support from artists and organizations, the subsequent punishments and suffering of the girls involved went largely unnoticed and unreported.

While some accounts of these girls' experiences do exist, their stories have been effectively silenced by the hegemonic structures of oppression, which is reflective of the position of women within the larger Chicano Movement, community, and society in general. Since then, Chicana playwrights have responded by presenting a diverse body

of art that specifically highlights the complex experiences and contributions of women, placing them within the larger community as autonomous subjects, countering patriarchal gender roles, and challenging the stereotypical and one-sided representations of women that male playwrights like Valdez tend to perpetuate. But what is the Pachuca's role and influence in this art? How might the Pachuca figure and her untold stories act as a foundation for contemporary Chicana playwrights and the dramatic portrayal of Chicanas in theater? How have Chicana playwrights sought and presented authentic and subjective identities that counter the oppressive gender norms and female invisibility that is present within both Chicano drama and the Chicano movement? This thesis looks more specifically at the Pachuca's role in the formation of Chicana identity, her influence on contemporary Chicana drama, and argues that she is still a rich and authentic icon who informs modern day Chicana art, culture, and identity. Chapter Two traces the formation of the Pachuca icon and identity; Chapter Three examines the continued influence of the Pachuca in the early Chicano Movement; Chapter Four critiques the representation of Valdez's female characters in *Zoot Suit* and its consequences; Chapter Five explores the ways in which Chicana playwrights are choosing to present the stories and voices of females past, present, and future. The importance of centering the female voice in such explorations is a primary concern, which is why interviews and first-hand accounts are included as much as possible. Feminist theory will be employed as a lens to begin examining these questions with a focus on the disciplines of history and literature.

Catherine S. Ramirez's *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* and Elizabeth Escobedo's *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits* are two essential accounts that include the actual voices of the Sleepy Lagoon women and explore the role of the Pachuca in 1940's history and culture. Rosa Linda Fregoso, Michelle Habell-Pallan and Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez examine the role of Chicanas on stage and their impact on the creation of culture and identity while also highlighting their previous invisibility. Fregoso's "Re-Imagining Chicana Urban Identities in the Public Sphere, Cool Chuca Style" provides the foundation for a deeper exploration of the Pachuca's continued importance in the ever-changing Chicana identity, an effective starting point for discussion on this topic.

After *Zoot Suit*'s portrayal of women exposed the need for more complex and authentic female characters on stage, Chicana playwrights have dramatically responded in ways that represent the true Pachuca spirit. Examination of the works of such contemporary Chicana playwrights as Josefina Lopez, Evelina Fernandez, and Cherrie Moraga will support and extend the work of the above authors, bringing the Pachuca into the twenty-first century. This examination will highlight her importance as a continual "subject in process" who trespasses the gendered boundaries of art, culture, family, and society and whose influence on Chicana drama and the Chicana playwright powerfully illuminates the authentic Chicana experience.

CHAPTER 2

THE PACHUCA ON THE STREETS

When thinking about the roles of women in the United States during World War II, one cannot help but recall the burly and empowered image of Rosie the Riveter. Her representation of patriotism and collective support for the war effort exemplifies the importance of iconography and imagery in fostering a sense of inclusivity, nationalism, and self-sacrifice within a group that, up until that point, had been largely excluded and marginalized from public life. Women's roles were clearly delineated as being exclusively within the private sphere of home and family, but the need for labor called for a suspension of these gender norms and a reframing of social expectations. Women could gain a sense of pride and autonomy in their newly available identities as public contributors to the war effort and were able to explore various opportunities for independence within a widened, yet still restrictive, set of parameters. And while Rosie was portrayed as a white woman, government agencies mounted a campaign to make sure that Mexican-American women were included and integrated into the "Americans All" vision of patriotism by creating imagery that promoted racial tolerance. Artists like Leon Helguera were called upon to create a unified American identity that could capitalize on the labor of women of Mexican descent. Written and visual propaganda focused on "the valiant service of uniformed men of Mexican descent and their patriotic home front sisters who volunteered their time and energy to defense production

lines...” (Escobedo 50-51). Yet, from the beginning, this identity entailed a need for gender conformity and assimilation of “American” values in which women were expected to fulfill their patriotic duty as laborers while also retaining and demonstrating the feminine qualities of cleanliness, chastity, innocence, self-sacrifice, and nurturing (C. Ramirez 64-68). Women who did not fit into the acceptable image of the respectable *Mexicana* threatened this new inclusion into American culture. Any hint of perceived rebellion through behavior, style, or language would be exploited by the racist media and exhibited as proof of the inferiority of the Mexican race, so many young Mexican women did their best to distance themselves from anyone who did not conform to a strict image of decency: enter the Pachuca.

With her knife-concealing pompadour, short skirt, and outlandish make-up, the Pachuca unapologetically entered the male-dominated public sphere, threatening the precarious cultural, racial, and gender norms that the government propaganda machine had worked so hard at constructing. Pachucas worked like men, played like men, and “were loud and boisterous, hanging out after school, sometimes at the *tiendita*, often on a street corner, smoking cigarettes ...” (Fregoso “Re-Imagining” 73). Their public visibility in the work force, in dance halls, and on the streets transgressed the gendered borders of space and representation. In appropriating and feminizing the masculine Pachuco style, Pachucas subverted and defied the image of the proper war-time woman and blatantly displayed that defiance in the public theater. Their overt presence “suggested a flagrant violation of conventional gender expectations that equated

respectable femininity with submissiveness and domesticity” (Escobedo 22), creating a cultural and social identity that was traitorous, treacherous, and inherently un-American. Framing Pachucas in this way was essential for the preservation of the dominant power structures which demanded unquestioned obedience and loyalty in order to guarantee the necessary human capital to fuel the national war machine.

This public visibility not only blatantly called into question the dominant national narrative but also served to begin the deconstruction of the Mexican-American cultural norms that dictated the proper roles and behaviors of its women. Further examination of the Pachuca’s defiance of these power structures reveals a deeper social identity that embodies a spirit of resistance which, while born out of the unique World War II social climate, was not limited to a specific space and time. Her overt presence on the streets and in the Mexican-American consciousness challenged social and cultural norms, making her one of the original border crossers of Chicano culture while also providing an iconic identity that ravaged stereotypical gender roles and was available as a source of autonomous power for Mexican-American women.

The Pachuca body itself, along with its various accoutrements, acted as a constant physical reminder of the dangers of female sexuality and power. Held up as the penultimate signifier of virtue, female virginity was valued in both the public and private domains in a way that placed the burden of an entire racial and national identity on a woman’s sexual purity. Vicky L. Ruiz points out that “[c]laiming public space can be intertwined with sexuality” (121), so as Pachucas publicly claimed space while

corrupting the image of the acceptable female both within and outside of the home, it allowed for the media and society to shape their identities into sexual deviants whose exaggerated style signified an immoral character: “Indeed, *because* they made a show of their makeup, clothes, and hair, pachucas were deemed tacky and cheap—in other words, morally suspect and sexually available” (C. Ramirez 71). This public identity also affected their private and familial status since the pressure to remain sexually pure came not only from external entities, but was also inherently tied to Mexican culture and the family’s standing in the community. “Loss of virginity not only tainted the reputation of an individual, but of her kin as well” (Ruiz 52), which reflects the influence of the iconic *Virgen de Guadalupe* within Mexican culture. She is held up as the ultimate standard of feminine decency and maternal nurturing; any woman whose behavior did not conform to this standard was immediately categorized as a whore, no matter if she was sexually active or not. By conflating female behavior with that of the holiest of cultural feminine representations, any perceived threat to dominant patriarchal norms signified a betrayal of the highest order, yet Pachucas subverted the meaning of this icon not by destroying it, but by representing the way that *la Virgen de Guadalupe* embodies the blending of cultures. As a cultural and religious icon, she “brings together the Spanish Catholic and indigenous Mexican religions through the church built in her honor, which is thought to have been built on the site of the temple of the goddess Tonantzin” (Blake 16). In this way, the Pachuca body signifies the “church” of disruption and the reconstruction of the sacred female whose body is the site for the creation of an

autonomous identity, a dangerous place to inhabit during the precarious times in which she lived.

The Pachucas' social status threatened to undermine and negate all of the propagandist efforts of so-called inclusion by the United States government. As the need to recruit Mexican-American soldiers and labor forced government agencies to portray a more progressive stance on race relations, Pachucas perpetually communicated to the Mexican-American community that no matter how many feel-good posters and publications were circulated, no matter how many of their young men they sent to die for the country, they were still, and may always be, second-class citizens. Their presence continued to highlight the polarization between the races "pos[ing] an additional danger to the social white order ... [and] threatening to undermine ... visions of racial uplift and cultural preservation" (Escobedo 31, 43). Their identity and physical bodies marked the social and cultural border that existed between the races, while also creating space for a more critical perspective of race relations. If, as Gloria Anzaldua states, "[t]he border is the locus of resistance" (49), then Pachucas represented a gendered and racial resistance that threatened both the public and private social order of power because they forced the Mexican-American community to pay "attention to the historically and socially constructed borders and spaces [they] inherit[ed] and that frame[d their] discourses and social relations" (Fregoso *The Bronze Screen* 66). Their open refusal to conform to social expectations could not be ignored

and their constant crossing of both the physical and metaphorical borders was a cause of great concern for all of the hegemonic power structures of the time.

Since Pachucas did not adhere to neither the national nor cultural gender norms, they were demonized in both the public and private spheres, essentially making them outsiders in every aspect of their lives, but also forcing them to create a “collective identity that helped them to escape their feelings about being outsiders in the United States by claiming an affirming identity *as* outsiders in the United States” (Escobedo 38). The convergence of culture, geography, and history created multiple borders that Pachucas were forced to navigate. In order to create and claim a subjectivity and cultural identity outside of the many dominant systems, Pachucas had to appropriate, subvert, and reconstruct the negative identities and stereotypes that barraged them from all angles of life. If “the desire among subordinated peoples to overturn the disparaging ways in which they have appeared as ‘the Other’ within the hegemonic discourses of ‘Western’ thought, undergirds the quest for an alternative national or cultural identity” (Fregoso *The Bronze Screen* 28), then they were fighting a three-pronged system which burdened them not only with the disparaging national identity that conflated their bodies with the betrayal of American values but also the cultural and gendered expectations within the Mexican-American community itself. The Pachuca was the outsider of the outsiders and her identity represents one of the earliest incarnations of the female iconoclast by Mexican-American women, perhaps one of the first “border feminists.”

The concept of the border feminist as presented by Anzaldua and further discussed by Sonia Saldivar-Hull “is a woman comfortable with new affiliations that subvert old ways of being” (214). Every day, in various significant ways, she challenges and overturns the dominant hegemonic structures that oppress and subordinate women, not only crossing but also exploiting, appropriating, transforming, revolutionizing, and transcending the physical and metaphorical borders of power. She is the transgressor, the translator, the destroyer, and the creator. The uniqueness and power of the Pachuca as a border crosser lies in her very public visibility on the streets, a tangible physical border that represents the gendered and social limitations for Mexican-American women. She creates and forms her subjectivity in a space that is accessible to all and that conspicuously exposes her marginalization, therefore opening the way for other women to question and challenge their own positions. When confronting oppressive power structures, resistance and creation for the “female subject has been affected through consciousness raising” (Alarcon “The Theoretical Subjects” 33), so the Pachuca’s overt challenge on the streets of World War II America succeeded in raising the consciousness of an entire generation of women while also challenging the ways in which historical and cultural representations of Mexican women have perpetuated the patriarchal structures of power.

As stated above, Pachucas crossed the border of *La Virgen’s* iconic representation by bringing focus to the way in which she signifies the blending of cultures, but in doing this they were labeled as traitors by hegemonic power structures.

Their betrayal is likened to another pervasive cultural icon who represents the *vendida*, the sell-out, who is blamed for the destruction of an entire race: Malintzin Tenepal or *La Malinche*. By translating for and bearing the child of Hernan Cortez, she eventually became the cultural and historical representation for the untrustworthy female who would deceive, seduce, and then abandon her people: “Her supposed renunciation of the indigenous male in favor of the foreigner (Cortes) is named malinchismo” (Blake 41). Yet again, the Pachuca was able to claim her own subjectivity within this “malinchismo” and appropriate *Malinche’s* status instead as “a gifted young linguist who lived on the margins and made decisions within the borders of her world” (Ruiz 107). Pachucas rejected the negative objectivity of *Malinche* and embraced her disobedience as a source of power and creation both within and outside of social, cultural, and gendered borders. They publicly flaunted their bodies, language, and independence while simultaneously challenging their expected roles within the family as well. In an interview with the Chicana author Lindsey Haley, she recalls how her own mother and aunts who were Pachucas rejected typical gender norms within their own households. When asked if the women in her family were expected to cater to the men, she replied,

No, the women in our family don’t do that. They call that a bunch of bullshit, you know. They run the family and the men were strong and quiet ... They let the women run everything ... They worked. They handed over the paycheck ... My tia decided when they would get a new living

room set, when it was time to buy a new car. They handled the finances.

They handled everything ... Catering to men? No. (Haley)

The women of Haley's family are a microcosm of the ways in which Pachucas transgressed and disobeyed gender norms in ordinary ways and everyday circumstances. In doing so, they transformed their disobedience, which was usually perceived "as a lack of devout allegiance," into "a radical questioning of our forms of life" (Alarcon "Chicana's Feminist Literature" 185). They forced their families and anyone else who witnessed such gender transgressions to question the structures that dictated female subjectivity and identity. By removing the Oz-like curtain from the wizard of patriarchal power, they exposed not only the fragility of such structures but also highlighted the potential for women to create their own lives and identities.

Yet because the lives and stories of women such as Haley's family have garnered little attention from academics, the power of the icon of the Pachuca goes largely untapped by women of color who are navigating and crossing their own borders. In her examination of the Pachuca and her importance within history and culture, Catherine S. Ramirez comments on the need to expose the stories of these women and how they have been integrated into the Mexican-American consciousness: "They show that Mexican American girls and women were more than just pawns in conflicts between men, that they have ascribed meanings to the world around them and thus have endeavored to reshape this world" (54). The women involved in the infamous Sleepy Lagoon murder trial are an excellent example of the culture of resistance that the

Pachuca represents. In such a historically important and racialized legal case that drew much public attention, the voices of the women of Sleepy Lagoon get lost within the sensationalized stories and support of the young men involved. While not minimalizing the injustice done to the young men, the fact that these women did not even receive a trial and were effectively incarcerated in the Ventura School for Girls “even after their male companions won their appeal and were released from prison” (C. Ramirez 31) highlights the gendered inequality when addressing injustice.

In many ways, these women have much to teach about resistance through language and silence. By appropriating Pachuco slang and at times refusing to answer questions on the stand, the women of Sleepy Lagoon subverted both the language and silence of male rebellion while also openly defying the authority of the state. When asked to testify against her male counterparts, Bertha Aguilar is quoted as saying, “When I went to Ventura they told me to forget everything” (qtd. in C. Ramirez 102), which demonstrates one way these women disrupted that authority and appropriated it to work in their favor. These types of expressions signified a resistance to all forms of authority and eventually overcame the cultural labels of being “unladylike” and “un-American.” The integration of Pachuco slang into the female lexicon persisted into future generations, becoming a source of cultural and individual pride among future Chicanas. Lindsey Haley speaks on the importance of her first language in both her family and her writing:

Having grown up with that Pachuco slang, Spanglish was my first language ... The language kind of integrated itself into, you know, the family ... With my writing, it's a way of keeping it alive and especially Spanglish, the language that I grew up with ... I want to use those words ... That's what I want to write in, you know, "*Q Vo Carnal!*" ... not that everybody has to be a Pachuca ... but don't look down on us. (Haley)

As Haley demonstrates, the language of the Pachuca becomes an intimate form of expression that signifies a living and continued resistance, as well as a cultural identity that embodies a long history of female defiance. Haley's desire to stay true to that identity in her writing through the use of language positions the Pachuca as a powerful agent of change deserving of respect and recognition.

After the Sleepy Lagoon trial, Pachucas became an even greater threat and continued to be harassed and arrested by the authorities if they were seen on the streets wearing the Pachuca style. Because they "lacked adequate supervision, roamed neighborhoods, and stayed out late with companions deemed 'undesirable'" (Escobedo 25), the Pachuca body was publicly vilified and policed in order to minimize the power that it represented, but no matter how hard the press tried to demonize her, it did not stop young women from adopting the Pachuca style or being seen in the public sphere of the streets. In this way, "pachucas are trespassers in public spaces, violating the boundaries of femininity" (Fregoso "Re-Imagining" 75) and thus setting an example of resistance that was dangerous, unique, and dynamic.

The Pachuca's identity as a border crosser in conjunction with the opportunity for greater public visibility created a ripe environment for the formation of an icon of resistance that has endured, transformed, and evolved in its subjectivity. Based on Stuart Hall's second view of the formation of cultural identity, the enduring power of the Pachuca can be perceived:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (212-213)

The Pachuca's position within World War II America, with its unique opportunities for greater autonomy, independence, and visibility for women, along with her ability to trespass multiple physical and metaphorical borders, allowed for a cultural identity that is the essence of Hall's perspective. During this very specific time in history, Pachucas were able to form a subjectivity that not only trespassed the boundaries of social and gendered norms, but also inhabited that space of perpetual creation and destruction that is timeless and ahistorical. In having to constantly adapt to an environment that positioned her body as a battle ground for national and cultural dominance, the Pachuca was forced to destroy and create identities in response to multiple external forces that

sought to conceal and oppress her power. This power can be likened to that of the indigenous Aztec moon-goddess, *Coyolxauqui*, who “represents fragmentation, imperfection, incompleteness, and unfulfilled promises, as well as integration, completeness, and wholeness” (Anzaldúa 50). Like the moon that is hidden during the daylight hours, hegemonic power structures did their best to suppress the light of the Pachuca, but her ability to adapt and appropriate allowed her not only to feel comfortable in this position but also to internalize it in such a way that was both whole and incomplete. Hers is an open-ended subjectivity that leaves room for “*process* as opposed to structure” and that “cannot solely be grounded in an essence but is as well a construction of ourselves as certain subjects” (Fregoso *The Bronze Screen* 31-32).

Fregoso’s theory of the “subject in process” illuminates the Pachuca’s unique position in a certain historical milieu while also highlighting the power of resistance that she embodies and passes on to future generations of Chicanas. As she inherited the burdens of such cultural icons as *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Malinche*, and *Coyolxauqui*, she was and is also able to “exist in a borderland not limited to geographic space...not acknowledged by hegemonic culture” (Saldivar-Hull 211) which enables her to transform and incorporate those mythologies into empowering and intimate aspects of self. Her travels in this liminal space impart a legacy and identity that would consciously and unconsciously endure into future generations, forms, and representations of Chicana resistance.

CHAPTER 3

THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF THE PACHUCA
ICON WITHIN THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

As the Zoot Suit Riots and Sleepy Lagoon Trial exposed the systemic racism perpetrated against Mexican-Americans, it directly contradicted the propaganda of inclusivity used by the government to capitalize on the labor of this same group of people. Once World War II ended, any pretense of “Americans All” was unnecessary, and “returning Mexican American veterans found that many services were denied to them because of their race” (Acuna 250). The years after the war saw a growing level of community, political, and social involvement by Mexican-Americans fighting for basic rights, equal treatment, and the preservation of their neighborhoods; this activism was met with accusations of communist ties, which continued to paint Mexican-Americans as a threat to the dominant culture. Decades of segregation, vilification, and marginalization left the Mexican-American community poised for a revolution, one in which they could reclaim a sense of pride in their Mexican heritage while also seeking visibility, justice, and inclusion within American society. With the youth leading the way, the Chicano Nationalist Movement emerged in the 1960’s as a way for Mexican-Americans to confront the hegemonic power structures that kept them oppressed. Using a broad spectrum of strategies, from the militancy of the Brown Berets to the

peaceful marches of the United Farm Workers, the Chicano Movement became a powerful political, social, and cultural force.

The spirit of *Chicanismo* was deeply rooted in the preservation of Mexican culture and rejected calls for the assimilation of Chicanos into the dominant American culture; their treatment during World War II, as well as the subsequent years of activism, had effectively taught the Chicano community that the color of their skin would prevent full inclusivity, so the movement focused primarily on race and class issues. *Chicanismo* encouraged a return to Mexican traditions and values, viewing them as useful tools in the fight for equality, yet there was little if any examination of the more damaging aspects of these cultural norms. While they brought a sense of unity and pride to the movement, simultaneously many of them upheld and perpetuated patriarchal dominance within the family and community. For example, the traditional family unit was seen as “the base of Mexican culture and the basis for resistance to domination” (Orozco 12), serving as the foundation of support for the men who publicly battled external oppressive forces and structures. Ideologies like these once again delineated public and private space, keeping Chicanas in proscribed roles and preventing their full and equal participation in a movement that claimed to benefit them. Chicanas very quickly perceived the gendered inequalities within their own community and realized that they would need to assert their subjectivity and autonomy in order to draw attention to the shortcomings within the Movement, but how could they do this in a way that remained faithful to their history and traditions? In this new

movement that showcased the beauty and complexity of the Mexican-American culture, how could Chicanas transform their identities in such a way that challenged their gendered oppression while also integrating the authenticity and strength of *Chicanismo*? The exploration of such resistance during this time reveals the ways in which the spirit of the Pachuca endured and influenced Chicanas, providing a historical and cultural icon that continued to cross borders and trespass into male-dominated spaces. By centering the Chicana voice and experience during this time, an exploration of the Pachuca's newest reincarnation as the "subject in progress" is possible.

As the Chicano Movement gained momentum, the figure of the Pachuco was transformed in order to "affirm[] precisely those identities previously devalorized in relation to dominant culture ..." (Fregoso *The Bronze Screen* 29). No longer seen as a threat to the stability of the Mexican-American family, he became an empowering icon who "often articulated and complemented the values and goals of Chicano cultural nationalism" (C. Ramirez 119), which included rejecting assimilation while also valuing what Maxine Baca Zinn calls "political familism." This ideology not only calls for the preservation of the family structure in order to provide protection and refuge within the private sphere, but it also demands political and social activism from the entire family unit in the public sphere, which had unintended consequences for females within the movement who were empowered by their visibility and the access to public platforms in which to voice their concerns. The Pachuca as both public and private figure offered a means for many women to confront patriarchy and racism within the movement

because “[p]olitical activity challenges women’s and men’s traditional positions; it changes women’s relationship to the family, and it generates conditions for the emergence of women’s consciousness” (Zinn 419). The Chicano Movement, coupled with the history of female resistance as embodied within the icon of the Pachuca, created an opportunity for women to establish their positions in the culture as individuals with the power to affect real social change for and within the Chicano community. The reincarnation of the Pachuca within the Movement and her continued transformation as a “subject in progress,” confirms that “[p]ast resistances serve as present and future inspirations” (Blake 19) and cements her importance as an enduring cultural identity from which Chicanas could draw.

As the Pachuca opened the way to the creation of a socially conscious Chicana identity during the Chicano Movement, the demons of silence and invisibility followed the Chicana within her own community, demons fed by the propagation of such one-dimensional portrayals as the virgin and whore. These gender norms remained paradigms of femininity throughout and beyond this time, and the battle for the voices of women such as those of Sleepy Lagoon continued within a movement that fought for social and racial equality. But the ghost of *La Malinche* as a signifier of betrayal was prevalent as Chicanas began questioning their second-class citizenship within the movement, especially once women began to independently organize and make themselves and their issues more visible. Race and class issues took precedence over gender inequalities, so as Chicanas confronted their male counterparts, they were

“perceived as corrupted by ‘foreign’ or ‘bourgeois’ influences that threaten[ed] to destroy their people” (Yarbro-Bejerano 393). As Chicanos openly made their demands for social and racial equality, Chicanas were expected to silently and invisibly follow suit, and any woman who tried to draw attention to patriarchal exploitation was again labeled as the traitorous whore because of her unwillingness to abnegate her own identity to that of the males and the collective movement. Her “disobedience [was] seen as a lack of devout allegiance, and not necessarily a radical questioning of [her] forms of life” (Alarcon “Chicana’s Feminist Literature” 185), so that any feminist criticism was viewed as a “white” issue that had no important bearing on the Chicano community. The powerful mythology of the Pachuca was over-shadowed by the patriarchal agenda which tried to use the mythology of *La Malinche* to replace any empowering effects that the Pachuca might have birthed. During the Movement, the *malinche* mythology was strengthened because “[i]t is further entrenched by a system of anglo imperialism which long ago put Mexicans and Chicanos in a defensive posture against the dominant culture” (Moraga *Loving* 91), yet Chicana activists found ways to appropriate and subvert these traitorous stereotypes in order to assert control over the formation of their own identities both within and outside of the Movement.

The unintended consequences of political familism began to emerge as Chicanas took advantage of the heightened visibility that activism provided them in order to shape their cultural identity: “Chicana feminists criticized the notion of the ‘ideal Chicana’ that glorified Chicanas as strong, long-suffering women who had endured and

kept Chicano culture and the family in tact” (Garcia 421). They created new avenues of feminist activism which again trespassed the borders of public and private space, rejecting the above stereotypes and seeking leadership roles within the movement. In order to battle the gendered norms of acceptable Chicana activism, many times they were forced to publicly question and disobey male authority figures that included both family members and other Chicano activists.

Though not a self-professed Pachuca or Chola, activist, politician, and educator Victoria Castro demonstrates the influence of the Pachuca icon in her integral participation within the early Chicano Movement and subsequent political career. As the only daughter in a family with four brothers and a strict father, she learned the value of education and social awareness while traditional gender roles were still paradoxically enforced in her house. The males of the family tried to keep her sheltered and expected “proper” female behavior from her, especially in a public sphere that demanded a strict curfew and a docile, unassertive persona, controls that did not extend to her brothers. Education was also an important aspect of their futures, but her father did not approve of educating women and could not understand Castro’s desire to attend college. Even though both of her parents were involved in labor and social activism, Castro was not exposed to opportunities for involvement herself until she attended the first Chicano Youth Leadership Conference at Camp Hess Kramer during her final year of high school. It was at this time that her eyes were opened to the oppression and discrimination

within her school and community, giving her an understanding of her place within the Movement and shaping her future activism:

I was already feeling the subtle racism, understanding my role as being able to maneuver that world or to enter it and that I had equal grounds to enter it, and that sort of came after Hess Kramer. I think it gave me a voice and a vision that I didn't have because I always did what everybody ever asked of me, whether it was a parent or whether it was a teacher. I never rocked the boat in my life. (Castro)

As Castro continued to "rock the boat" in various ways, including her involvement in the coordination of the 1968 East Los Angeles High School Walkouts, she and her father came into direct conflict, with him at one time even labeling her a communist after seeing her very public activist persona on television; this label did not extend to her brothers. Her father, who himself was involved in the early Pachuco lifestyle, was quick to delineate the border between the public and private sphere, so Castro's trespassing into the public realm directly rejected his sole control over that area: "They [former Pachucos] had the street life, but they also had strict households. They were in control ... and you don't cross into that other world" (Castro). But bolstered by her new vision, birthed once again by the new "historically and socially constructed borders and spaces [she] inherit[ed] and that frame[d her] discourses and social relations" (Fregoso *The Bronze Screen* 66), Victoria represents a new incarnation of the Pachuca spirit; her social activism trespasses once again into the male-dominated

public space while her open rebellion against the gendered expectations of her family indicates a reformation of her private identity. Asserting her autonomy during this time was integral in shaping Castro's future work and giving her the skills to navigate numerous borders in her educational and political careers, while also being a strong advocate for Chicana voices and leadership: "Whatever level I was, I always saw myself as a mentor and as a facilitator. Now I could hold my own ... I would never allow someone to play a superior role with me. I'm equal from the get-go ... And I used to tell the other Chicanos I hung around with, 'We don't just have to be the secretaries.' No, no, no" (Castro). In this way, she transformed and used the patriarchal structures inherent in the Chicano Movement in order to create an autonomous, female subjectivity, a process that Fregoso describes as a "transgression in which existing borders forged in domination can be redefined" (*The Bronze Screen* 69). The male-dominated borders of the Chicano Movement were a fertile liminal space for Chicanas like Victoria.

Much like the Pachuca, Chicana activists also called for the examination of sexuality and reproductive rights, once again using their bodies as physical reminders of the gendered borders of oppression. While Puchucas of the 1940's employed fashion and style to announce their presence and challenge norms of proper feminine behavior, the Chicana movement decolonized the body. Male concerns...gave way to female demands for birth control and against forced sterilizations, for welfare rights, for prison rights for *pintas*, for protection against male

violence, and most importantly, for sexual pleasure both in marriage and outside of it. "La Nueva Chicana," the new woman, shattered the cultural stereotypes and defined herself. (Gutierrez 53-54)

By openly voicing their demands, Chicanas not only internally shaped the direction of the discussion within the Movement but also called for external resources to be funneled to female issues. Clinics and community centers within Chicano neighborhoods began offering programs specifically focused on things like sex education and access to birth control, providing women with the knowledge and tools necessary for taking control of their bodies. Lindsey Haley recalls the clinic in her neighborhood of Venice, California, where she learned about the power of her sexuality and body, and how it could eventually benefit her:

When I was twelve I got this summer youth employment program, and I was working for the Venice Family Clinic ... I used to work as an interpreter for the pregnancy clinic and the immunization clinic, and then twice they had me come in for the STD and birth control clinic, and then dealing with the OBGYN's, and they would, you know, talk to the expectant mothers on what type of birth control they were going to go on, and so by the time I was twelve I knew ... That was 1973 when I left, and I knew that I had to hold on to my virginity, that it was my ticket out ... ticket out of my poverty. (Haley)

Haley's experience once again demonstrates the ways in which Chicanas subverted oppressive practices for their own benefit; her virginity was her ticket to freedom, and so she employed her body and the knowledge she had gained from her work at the clinic to secure a life of her own choosing. At fourteen years old she left the helplessness of her physically abusive home, taking control of her body and future, and has since made a life in which she works and creates in service to her community.

As Haley's experience demonstrates, "La Nueva Chicana" demanded that female sexuality and reproductive rights become part of the public discussion and that access to these resources be widespread and readily available to every class of woman. This battle, though, was also very present in the private domain of the home. Chicanas stepped into their own sexual authority and saw that they were the experts of their own bodies, their own pleasure, and their own fertility, taking the initiative to not only educate themselves but also other Chicanas and female family members, no longer allowing the men in their lives to dictate their choices. For Victoria Castro, it was her mother and other women within the Movement who provided an example of sexual liberation within the home. Though sexuality was not an open topic of discussion in her house, Victoria's mother instilled in Castro an independence and self-sufficiency that did not include the need for a man's support or permission; Castro, who never married, recalls the various ways that her mother's words and actions influenced her life choices:

My mother was a devout Catholic ... She was scolded and reprimanded by a priest for practicing some form of birth control ... She told the priest,

“When you can feed and house my children, and assist me do that, then I’ll think of having more children, but five right now is enough.” And she never went back to Sunday mass until much later in her life ... I think I ended up not getting married because my mother told me I had to take care of myself. I never got that thing of looking for a man that was going to take care of me, and I only dated Latinos, Chicanos, so they were always looking for women they were going to take care of, and if they were trying to take that role with me, I was resistant. I’m equal to you ... My mother had told me, “I don’t want you to be dependent on a man” ... That’s why I’m not married. (Castro)

Castro’s mother’s resistance to her priest and rejection of the typical female roles within the home demonstrate the Pachuca spirit of border-crossing in the private sphere. In conveying these lessons to her daughter, not only was she able to subvert and exploit her role as wife and mother, but she also drastically transformed the creation of female subjectivity for Castro and herself. Because “[t]he subject who first crossed over is not the same subject who returns across the borderline” (Fregoso *The Bronze Screen* 68), she acts as another example of the subject in progress by exhibiting the fluidity and complexity of the Chicana identity. Castro herself understands the deep importance of her mother’s teachings, and their influence can be traced throughout Castro’s life and work as a Chicana activist.

In tracing the influence of the Pachuca throughout these decades, her identity as a subject in progress becomes an inheritance of strength and empowerment that is handed down to every subsequent generation. Female resistance in the Chicano Nationalist Movement demonstrates the importance of her role as another incarnation of *La Malinche*, what Debra J. Blake describes as a “woman of discord.” These women are a necessary power for change and “[t]he dynamic reproduction cycle they represent signifies repetition, disruption, and re-creation of history, genealogy, and the human life cycle” (Blake 15). The Pachuca is an essential member of this genealogy of women of discord whose incarnation within the Chicano Movement provided an avenue for the continued fight against gender oppression. Her influence endures into the Chicano art and culture of future decades, despite the attempt to silence and misrepresent her by male artists.

CHAPTER 4

PACHUCA SILENCE IN *ZOOT SUIT*

Based on the true events of the Los Angeles Zoot Suit Riots and Sleepy Lagoon Trial in 1942 and '43, the play *Zoot Suit* by Luis Valdez chronicles the story of Henry Reyna, the character who represents Henry Leyvas, one of the young men falsely charged with the murder of Jose Diaz at the Sleepy Lagoon. An emotionally charged community, fueled by anti-Mexican sentiments perpetrated in the Hearst-controlled media, provides the backdrop for a criminal trial riddled with misconduct and denial of civil rights by authorities. Eventually all twenty-two of the young men charged were released with the help of the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee which consisted of community lawyers and activists dedicated to justice for these men; Alice Bloomfield, a character in Valdez's *Zoot Suit*, is one of those activists. While trying to gain Henry's trust, Alice says, "We are all in jail, Henry. Some of us just don't know it" (Valdez 1.8), reminding the reader of the various types of prisons, visible and invisible, that keep people confined (C. Ramirez 98-100).

Zoot Suit offers a look into the oppressive systems of racism and inequality that provided the perfect environment for the Zoot Suit Riots, a violent clash between Mexican-Americans and Anglo servicemen. Yet, while this violence was enacted in the streets of Los Angeles, a simultaneous battle is happening on the pages of this play in which another system seems to be directing the portrayal of the female characters.

Prompted by Alice's statement above, the reader begins to wonder: Who is really in jail here? How does Valdez define imprisonment? As one begins to examine Valdez's portrayal of the women in the play, it becomes necessary to search for the invisible system of value or worth that Valdez uses as a measuring stick for his female characters and the gender norms that become evident in those portrayals. By employing these gender norms in his portrayals, how does Valdez reveal his sense of value and worth? Does his value system reveal a critique of gender norms or is he perpetuating another "prison"? How does this value system reflect the reality of the Pachuca? An analysis of three female characters in *Zoot Suit* reveals Valdez's invisible value system as it applies to these women while also exploring Valdez's motives in employing certain symbolic gender roles.

Act 1, Scene 4 of *Zoot Suit* introduces the audience to the three closest women to Henry, his mother, his sister, and his girlfriend, and in this scene the reader can begin to understand Valdez's use of the typical female Mexican roles of virgin, mother, and whore. The religious icon of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* serves as a representation for the roles of both the virgin and the mother; the young, chaste woman is the virgin who becomes the mother once she is passed from her father to her husband. Both of these men are expected to uphold and guard the virtue of the daughter/wife and any transgression of the virginal boundaries directly reflects on their own masculinity, which is judged on their ability to control the woman. Once the virgin becomes the mother, she is expected to suffer quietly for her family while never questioning the authority of

the males. In order to uphold these roles, the treacherous icon of *La Malinche* is again represented in the figure of the whore to illustrate the consequences of non-conformance. When a woman does not conform to either the virgin or mother standards of femininity, she becomes the whore who is scapegoated and cast aside. Any display of autonomy or sexual agency immediately places any female character in this position, and she pays a high price for stepping outside of acceptable female behavior. As these roles have been perpetuated in Mexican-American narratives and art, “[w]hether figured as the self-renounced female, *la madre abnegada* (the suffering mother), the passive virgin, or in portraits of female treachery or sexual promiscuity, these views of women, assigned one-dimensionality, are invariably sublimated into symbolic icons and archetypes of Mexican femaleness” (Fregoso “Homegirls” 320). These archetypes not only serve to keep women powerless in the face of patriarchy but also reveal the value system that is used to assign worth to females, a value system that serves the male and keeps him in the position of power.

The very first female to come on stage in Act 1, Scene 4 after three full scenes is Dolores, Henry’s mother; in doing this, Valdez establishes Dolores’s primacy in Henry’s life and places her in the honored position of the matriarch. At the beginning of the scene, Dolores grudgingly supports each of the males’ choices, which automatically makes her the nurturing yet powerless mother:

HENRY. This isn’t just any night, jefa. It’s my last chance to use my
tacuche.

DOLORES. Tacuche? Pero tu padre ...

HENRY. (*Revealing a stubborn streak.*) I know what me 'apa said, 'ama. I'm going to wear it anyway.

DOLORES. (*Sighs, resigns herself.*) Mira, hijo. I know you work hard for your clothes. And I know how much they mean to you. Pero por diosito santo, I just don't know what you see en esa cochinada de "soot zoot." (Valdez 1.4)

In this passage, his "tacuche" represents Henry's independence, subjectivity, ability to establish and display his chosen identity, and ownership of his own body, traits that Henry's mother cannot deny to Henry, which Valdez demonstrates when he directs Henry to show a "stubborn streak," forcing Dolores to "resign herself" to Henry's choice of clothing. Also when she refers to Henry's father's opinion, this signals that she gives supremacy to the opinions of these men. Valdez does not allow Dolores to challenge either Henry's choice in clothing or Enrique's opinion on the matter, which reveals his adherence to the typical impotent mother role for his first female character, Fregoso's "*la madre abnegada*" who fearfully suffers in the concern for her men but whose real and sole function is to support them without question. Dolores also functions as the enforcer of typical gender norms for the other women in the scene:

(*Lupe Reyna, 16, enters dressed in a short skirt and baggy coat. She is followed by Della Barrios, 17, dressed more modestly. Lupe hides behind a newspaper sheet on the line ...*)

DOLORES. Della, hija, buenas noches. How pretty you look.

DELLA. Buenas noches. (*Dolores hugs Della, then spots Lupe hiding behind the clothesline.*)

DOLORES. (*To Lupe.*) Oye y tu? What's wrong with you? What are you doing back there?

LUPE. Nothing, 'ama.

DOLORES. Well, come out then.

LUPE. We're late, 'ama.

DOLORES. Come out, te digo. (*Lupe comes out exposing her extremely short skirt. Dolores gasps.*) Valgame Dios! Guadalupe, are you crazy? Why bother wearing anything? (Valdez 1.4)

As she interacts with Lupe, her daughter, and Della, Henry's new girlfriend, Valdez extends his adherence to gender roles by having Dolores criticize Lupe for exposing herself, a sign of a whore, while Della, the virgin who is "dressed more modestly," receives immediate acceptance and praise from the matriarch. Dolores welcomes her into the family with the use of "hija" and physical affection while also complimenting her appearance. Conversely, when Lupe emerges in the Pachuca style, Dolores suggests that she is damaged and abnormal when she asks, "What's wrong with you ... are you crazy?" This language, along with Lupe's physical position behind the newspapers and apart from her family, places Lupe in the metaphorical position of the outsider and signals her rejection because of the way she is dressed. She will not be accepted by her

family if she continues to place herself in the role of the whore through her clothing, so Valdez uses Dolores to keep Lupe from establishing any independence or autonomy. Later when Enrique, Henry's father, explosively enters the scene, Dolores continues to uphold gender norms by functioning as an extension of her husband and acting as an enforcer:

ENRIQUE. (*Off.*) VIEJA!

DOLORES. Andale. Go change before your father sees you.

ENRIQUE: I'm home. (*Coming into the scene.*) Buenas noches, everybody.

(*All respond. Enrique sees Lupe.*) Ay, jijo! Where's the skirt?!

LUPE. It's here.

ENRIQUE. Where's the rest of it?

DOLORES. She's going to the dance.

ENRIQUE. Y a mi que me importa? Go and change those clothes. Andale.

LUPE. Please, apa?

ENRIQUE. No, senorita.

LUPE. Chihuahua, I don't want to look like a square.

ENRIQUE. Te digo que no! i will not have my daughter looking like a ...

DOLORES. Like a puta ... I mean, a pachuca. (Valdez 1.4)

Enrique immediately calls for his "vieja" for support and Dolores responds accordingly by trying to get her daughter to change her inappropriate clothes, knowing how Enrique will react. This, in addition to Dolores finishing Enrique's sentence, signifies that she is of

the same mind as Enrique, acting and speaking only as an extension of him. When Dolores calls her daughter a “puta,” or whore, it signifies that this is a woman who has internalized the male value system and upholds the established and oppressive gender roles. Even though Enrique is sometimes portrayed comically and Dolores seems to continuously placate him, she still mirrors and enforces his rules and is thus rewarded with primacy in both Henry’s and Enrique’s life. Valdez has given her the coveted role of mother which comes with the value that she literally asked for earlier, “Valgame dios!”; this signifies that for Valdez, her worth lies solely in her ability to be an extension of Enrique and Henry.

Valdez’s value system continues to be revealed through the character of Della, who is portrayed as the proper female. She fulfills the role of the virgin which is signified by the modest clothing she wears, and Valdez makes sure to clearly differentiate her from Lupe:

LUPE. Ay, ‘ama, it’s the style. Short skirt and fingertip coat. Huh, Hank?

HENRY. Uh, yeah, ‘ama.

DOLORES. Oh si? And how come Della doesn’t get to wear the same style?

HENRY. No ... that’s different. No, chale. (Valdez 1.4)

In this exchange Henry acts as Valdez’s vehicle of approval. Della does not “get to wear” the short skirt of the Pachuca, which displays a lack of choice, and unlike Lupe, does not challenge this constraint. Her modesty in appearance and deference to the men in her

life make her “different” in Henry’s eyes, thus placing her in the position of the acceptable female and making her more valuable than Lupe. Valdez portrays Della as the standard of the proper female because she is not exposing her body and thus is being sufficiently controlled by both her father and Henry, the only man that has the privilege of access to her body. Valdez continues to display his approval of Della through the character of Enrique:

ENRIQUE. (*To Della.*) Buenas noches.

DELLA. Buenas noches.

HENRY. ‘Apa, this is Della Barrios.

ENRIQUE. Mira, mira ... So this is your new girlfriend, eh? Muy bonita.

Quite a change from the last one.

DOLORES. Ay, señor.

ENRIQUE. It’s true. What was her name?

DELLA. Bertha?

ENRIQUE. That’s the one. The one with the tattoo. (Valdez 1.4)

Enrique praises Henry’s choice in Della, approving of her difference from Henry’s former Pachuca girlfriend, another improper female who fulfills the role of the whore. Bertha is a marked woman who displays the obvious indicators of her “puta” status through her clothing and tattoo and has therefore been rejected by Henry. Della does not look like either Lupe or Bertha, so because she conforms to this standard, it creates a distinct separation between her and these other females. When the patriarch cements Della’s

superior position as Henry's acceptable choice, it again demonstrates Valdez's adherence to gender roles and norms. Finally, Valdez gives Della the ultimate validation later in the play, which continues to reinforce his position. In Act 1 Scene 10, Valdez has Henry propose marriage to Della, saying that he will give her "the biggest pachuco wedding L.A. has ever seen." The virgin is represented as the only acceptable choice for a wife, so when Henry chooses her in this way, Valdez essentially rewards Della for adhering to oppressive gender standards. She is valuable to Henry as a wife because of this adherence, which leads the reader to believe that Valdez also values the female who meets these standards and follows these rules.

The figure of the whore is portrayed in part through Lupe whose fashion choices put her dangerously close to potentially fulfilling that role, but Enrique and Dolores do their best to thwart that behavior. The reader gains a much clearer and more complete picture of Valdez's portrayal of the whore through the character of Bertha who emerges in Act 1, Scene 7. As indicated in Scene 4, Bertha did not make an acceptable girlfriend for Henry, so he rejected her. Valdez reinforces this rejection at the beginning of Scene 7 where Bertha confronts Della and Henry, immediately signaling to the audience that she does not conform to the standards of acceptable female behavior:

(The music comes to a natural break and shifts into a slow number.

Bertha approaches Henry and Della downstage on the dance floor.)

BERTHA. Ese, surete! How about a dance for old time's sake? No te hagas gacho.

HENRY. (*Slow dancing with Della.*) Sorry, Bertha.

BERTHA. Is this your new huisa? This little fly chick?

DELLA. Listen, Bertha...

HENRY. (*Stops her.*) Chale. She's just jealous. Beat it, Bertha. (Valdez 1.7)

Della tries responding to Bertha's challenge but gets silenced by Henry who speaks for her, thus keeping Della in her superior position and not allowing her to interact with the tainted whore. She is the "little chick" who must stay within Valdez's cage of proper behavior; with the word "*chale*," Henry not only dismisses Bertha but also Della's input within the exchange. Henry attempts to continue dismissing Bertha by telling her to "Beat it," but she tries asserting her independence by appropriating Henry's own words: "Bertha: Beat it yourself. Mira. You got no hold on me, cabron. Not any more. I'm as free as a bird" (Valdez 1.7). Valdez has thus far introduced us to the figures of the mother and virgin, figures who are validated by the males in the play, so he now uses Bertha to counter what he considers positive images, and her function is to present the dichotomous spectrum of female roles. Her defiance of Henry indicates her unwillingness to defer to male authority, and while she tries to use the image of the bird to represent her freedom, the reader sees that it comes with a price. Valdez continues portraying Bertha in a negative light by making her into the perceived typical Pachuca who uses crass language and slang, and who enjoys a good fight, which is only acceptable for the men in the play:

SMILEY. (*Coming up.*) Ese, Hank, that's the Downey Gang in the corner.

You think they're looking for trouble?

HENRY. There's only a couple of them.

BERTHA. That's all we need.

SMILEY. Want me to alert the batos?

HENRY. Nel, be cool.

BERTHA. Be cool? Huy, yu, yui. Forget it, Smiley. Since he joined the Navy,

this bato forgot the difference between being cool and being cool-O.

(She laughs and turns but Henry grabs her angrily by the arm. Bertha

pulls free and walks away cool and tough ... The Downey Gang

retreats, as the 38th razzes them all the way out. Insults are

exchanged. Bertha shouts "Chinga tu madre!" ...)

BERTHA. I could have beat the shit out of those two rucas. (Valdez 1.7)

By portraying Bertha in this way, Valdez equates the Pachuca with the whore, which signals that a Pachuca may be acceptable for a good time if she is "cool and tough," but eventually she will be cast aside for the pure virgin. As he tries to physically grab her, Henry's actions indicate that he tries to contain and restrain her behavior and words, but she pulls away after ridiculing him, telling the reader she cannot be controlled and thus no longer holds any real value for Henry. This ridiculing also calls into question Henry's sexuality and masculinity; it begins in the above quote when she calls him a

“cool-O” and continues later as she puts him down for not stabbing a member of the other gang:

TOMMY. Man, you’re lucky your brother was here.

BERTHA. Why? He didn’t do nothing. The old Hank would have slit Rafas’ belly like a fat pig.

HENRY. Shut your mouth, Bertha! (Valdez 1.7)

The knife fight in this scene is a phallic representation of the male domain, and since Henry backs down from the fight, Bertha’s criticism equates this with a loss of masculinity. Bertha trespasses into this public domain and inverts proscribed gender roles by openly challenging Henry, and, as is evidenced by Henry’s reaction, Bertha cannot be allowed to speak in this way or pass judgement on him. In fact, Valdez silences Bertha after this exchange and she is never heard from again, with Valdez essentially passing judgement on her and finding her unacceptable. Bertha pays a heavy price for being a Pachuca; Valdez rejects her complexity by choosing to equate the Pachuca to the whore and relegates her to an invisible role for the rest of the play. As Valdez glorifies the figure of the Pachuco, upholding him as a symbol of Chicano strength and pride throughout the play, the story of the Pachuca, as represented by Bertha, is no longer valuable enough for Valdez to continue telling, which is a direct indicator of Valdez’s own value system.

The women of *Zoot Suit*, now reduced to objects with no authentic life, can be traced back to conventions of *machismo* that are prevalent in Mexican culture, but also

reflect a wider suppression of female voices and experiences. Valdez's value system dictates that the women must be dichotomously portrayed as virgins, mothers, or whores because anything in between threatens the *machismo* power structure. In *Zoot Suit*, theater functions to "perpetuate[] the power relations of sexual difference through the exclusive representation of the male subject and the relegation of women to the status of Other within the social construct of the gender 'woman'" (Yarbro-Bejerano 392). The social constructs of virgin, mother, and whore force a woman like Della to be the one-dimensional figure who "represents the redemption of her gender through self-abnegation ..." while women like Bertha who challenge this social construct through their sexuality, language, or independent behavior, get placed into the whore column and "become [] the sight of degradation and evil" (Yarbro-Bejerano 393). The portrayal of these women as one-dimensional "others" perpetuates the dominant narrative of the male subject, leaving the complex voices and stories of Pachucas invisible and silent. As a consequence of these portrayals and the subsequent continuation of oppressive gender norms, the power of art as a catalyst for social change is reduced by its suppression of the female voice because the whole story isn't being told. Chicana voices and contributions remain in the background of Chicano culture and thus its history and art are the poorer for it. The Sleepy Lagoon Trial, while not usually found in mainstream history books, is well-known in Chicano culture and has gained much attention within the Chicano movement, but "*la pachuca* has been excluded from most Chicano accounts of what is generally deemed a watershed moment in Mexican-American history" (C.

Ramirez XIV). In *Zoot Suit*, Valdez perfunctorily mentions the sentencing of Della to the Ventura School for Girls, but only as it pertains to and furthers Henry's own situation and story. In this way, Valdez directly mirrors the reality for the girls of Sleepy Lagoon, eight young women who were given no trial or formal conviction but were deemed wards of the State of California and placed into the notoriously awful Ventura Reformatory School for an average of sixteen months (Escobedo 22-24). Portrayals of female characters like those in *Zoot Suit* serve to normalize female invisibility and gender oppression, which in turn has far-reaching consequences for Chicanas both past and present.

Though the Pachuco culture offered a way for women to demonstrate autonomy and resistance, it remained a male dominated realm in which the Pachuca was simultaneously hailed as cool and down while being castigated and vilified as a traitorous and over-sexed succubus, both in her own culture and mainstream society. Similarly, while *Zoot Suit* was garnering nationwide attention as the first Chicano play on Broadway, breaking through racial barriers and stereotypes, it continued to perpetuate oppressive gender norms that left women out of the dominant narrative and effectively silenced their voices. The value of Luis Valdez's contributions to Chicano theater and the Chicano movement cannot be ignored or minimized, but his portrayal of women in the play has forced Chicana playwrights to respond to and counter the one-dimensionality of such portrayals. The value system he demonstrates through his characters has provided a rich soil for the growth of feminist Chicana thought and art; therefore,

though this value system continues the patriarchal oppression of women, it also serves as a jumping off point for a massive body of important Chicana work. The Berthas of the world refuse to be silent, and the figure of the Pachuca refuses to be invisible, despite Valdez's attempt to do so.

CHAPTER 5

PACHUCA POWER ON STAGE

The Chicano movement, while claiming resistance to unjust systems and structures, continued upholding its core values of oppression in regards to gender roles and expectations. This contradiction is reflected in Valdez's female portrayals in *Zoot Suit*, an artistic piece championed as a major contribution to and accomplishment by the Chicano community, but which also continued to feed the destructive and oppressive roots of a myth "which has been carved into the very bone of Mexican/Chicano collective psychology" (Moraga *Loving* 93). Bolstered by thousands of years of recounting and artistic representation, the *Malinche* myth remained at the forefront of Chicano consciousness as the ultimate representation of female unreliability, suspicion, and promiscuity. Spawned by the need to position women as subjects within the dominant Chicano narrative, the Chicana playwright emerged in the 1970's as a representative voice of the Pachuca icon. The Chicano Movement made clear that "cultural integrity and the elimination of [women's] subordinate roles are not incompatible" (Zinn 421), so as Chicanas sought to shift the paradigms of destructive mythology, the values of the Pachuca materialized in Chicana drama.

The lasting influence of *Zoot Suit* is a testament to the power of storytelling and demonstrates the integral role of artists in creating a collective memory that can either uphold or dismantle oppressive icons. While the female portrayals in *Zoot Suit* promote

the *Malinche* icon, the invisible and silent stories of the Sleepy Lagoon women strengthen the power of the Pachuca as an alternative icon of Chicana subjectivity. Since the dominant Chicano culture does not value the Pachuca enough to tell her stories, Chicana artists have taken on the responsibility of excavating and exposing authentic female stories and lives. The Pachuca as the border-crossing subject in progress can be perceived in the evolution of the Chicana artist who publicly transforms silence and invisibility into powerful representations of a lost icon: “As a people who have been stripped of our history, language, identity, and pride, we attempt again and again to find what we have lost by digging into our cultural roots imaginatively and making art from our findings” (Anzaldua 48). Oppressive narratives like those in *Zoot Suit* inspire Chicana artists to respond with their own stories of autonomy and resistance, stories that truly represent the Chicana experience in all its complexities. When looking at the specific genre of drama and theater, how have Chicana playwrights attempted to dismantle gender oppressions in their art? As an icon from which to draw artistically, what values does the Pachuca represent and offer to Chicana playwrights that counteract the oppressive values represented in *Zoot Suit*? An examination of three works by Chicana playwrights reveals the various ways that they have chosen to respond and the powerful values that the Pachuca brings to their art.

Deemed by many as the “Father of Chicano Drama,” Luis Valdez and his work with El Teatro Campesino changed the face of theater in the United States forever, and many Chicana playwrights have cited the importance of his work in their own art,

despite, and even at times because of, his one-sided portrayals of female characters. In a personal interview, playwright Josefina Lopez, author of *Real Women Have Curves* and founder of the community theater Casa 0101 in Boyle Heights, California, speaks of her experience with Valdez as one of the driving forces behind her own work:

When I made that realization that all of his female characters were flat and stereotypical, it didn't make me upset. It just made me realize, Oh! He can't tell every story for Latinos because he's only human, and secondly, maybe the reason I can tell they're flat is because I'm supposed to write those stories. I'm supposed to fill them in with my experience, my humanity, so I saw it as an opportunity ... That's when I said, Oh, Valdez isn't writing about women, then I should, and then I became empowered to say, Wow! I have something to offer to Chicano and Latino theater that isn't there yet. (Lopez)

Lopez exemplifies the border artist who "alter[s] images and narrative representations to coincide with their perspective of themselves and how they exist within the culture ... they reproduce cultural memory while adapting it to their particular needs and experiences" (Blake 24). The Chicana playwright as a woman who crosses the borders of the stage represents another incarnation of the Pachuca in her ability to transform and appropriate artistic narratives that exclude and marginalize her.

Just as the street was the public border that Pachucas crossed in order to gain social and cultural visibility, so the stage is another physical representation of a male-

dominated space that Chicanas are crossing artistically. The collaborative and public nature of theater acts as a unique space that has the ability to expose the lies and shame that dominant social structures have placed on women. The interplay between the script, actors, directors, and audience members creates an immediacy that demands a deep personal engagement by all who participate. Lopez likens it to a place of confession and transformation in which all bear witness to the power of truth in storytelling:

So much about lying and illness and sickness and evil is all about shame, so theater is really an opportunity to have a forum where we take everything we're ashamed of, all the lies that we've been told about why we should be ashamed, and to present it to god in the light, and have an audience witness it, and to have that communion of a storyteller telling the truth, an audience to witness, and god to absorb it. (Lopez)

It is that public visibility, the act of being seen within a liminal border space, that creates the opportunity for growth and healing. When an artist bravely inhabits the border of the streets, the stage, or the actual demarcation between countries in her/his art, "s/he is able to reread, reinterpret, re-envision, and reconstruct her/his culture's present, as well as its past" (Anzaldua 60). The ruptures within the cultural and social identities of Chicanas get exposed and healed as the characters on stage confess their shame and are seen as complex creations of fully autonomous women. The sacred space of the stage offers a venue for the values of the Pachuca to take shape and form and in which the

courage of exposing oneself, both literally and artistically, embodies the true Pachuca spirit. As an icon of the original trespasser, she exemplifies the power of public visibility within a forbidden space to combat the invisibility of women who do not conform to gender expectations.

Lopez's most well-known play, *Real Women Have Curves*, confronts these gender expectations as her all-female cast of characters openly questions and then redefines what it means to be a "real" woman. Set in a clothing factory, the five women work together to fill an order while also grappling with their own identities and liberation. The women understand that, according to social and cultural norms, their value lies only their bodies' ability to uphold patriarchal standards: a "real" woman must get married and have many babies; a "real" woman only has sex for procreation and it must not be enjoyed; a "real" woman must be skinny and adhere to typical ideals of beauty. If their bodies do not conform to these standards, they are not worthy of being seen or loved.

For one of the characters, Estela, the struggle of dealing with a body that is literally "illegal" exemplifies the theme of being truly seen. Her entire life is dictated by her undocumented status, and she is so fearful of being deported that she must constantly live in shadows and remain unseen:

PANCHA. Dona Carmen, let those men in their vans come! Who cares?

We're all legal now! (Pancha goes to the door and opens it all the way. They all smile in relief and pride, then Estela, who has been stuffing her face, finally speaks up.)

ESTELA. I'm not. (*Pancha slams the door shut.*) (Lopez 1.1)

The door to the factory represents the invisibility of being undocumented and acts as the border that Estela must eventually cross in order to be seen. But first she must be willing to face the shame of being undocumented, confess the fears that she keeps hidden, and expose her vulnerability to the other women and the audience on the altar of the stage:

ESTELA. Ama, why is this happening to me? I'm going to get deported, aren't I, Ama?

CARMEN. Mira, supposing you do get deported, we'll get a coyote to smuggle you back in. Somehow we'll find the money.

ESTELA. But I would have let you and everybody down. I'll lose everything that I've worked for, the factory, and my self-respect. And I don't know if I can start again. (Lopez 1.5)

Estela has internalized the lie that her worth, her self-respect, is tied to the status of her citizenship, and if she is forced to cross that border again, her value is lost. Her fears are diminished only after she sees that the women do not subscribe to this value system and continue supporting her with their words and their labor, proving to her that she is not alone and that the women are willing to truly see her. This confession gives her the courage to be seen by others and eventually she voluntarily steps into the light:

ANA. Estela, can we please open the door?

PANCHA. Open the door? Pa que? So people that pass by can see us like this? ... (*The women look to Estela for a decision.*)

ESTELA. Okay ... Ama, open the door. (*Carmen goes to open the door. She turns back to Estela as if to make sure. Carmen opens the door and fans herself with it ...*). (Lopez 2.3)

In this scene, all of the women have stripped down to their underwear, so by opening the door, Estela symbolically invites the light to shine, not only on her own humanity, but on the other women who also are vulnerable and exposed. She has learned that nobody, whether fat or brown or undocumented, is “illegal”; in crossing the borders of the country, the doorway, and the stage, she has dismantled the oppressive value system that keeps her invisible and embodies one of the true Pachuca values.

Through the character of Estela, Lopez was able to deal with her own experience of being undocumented, thus exposing the shame that she felt around the issue. The act of writing this character and bringing her to life on the stage demonstrates the way that “[c]onfession [is] masked and revealed in the voices and faces of our characters. All is hunger. The longing to be known fully and still loved. The admission of our own inherent vulnerability, our weakness, our tenderness of skin, fragility of heart, our overwhelming desire to be relieved of the burden of ourselves in the body of another, to be forgiven of our ultimate aloneness ...” (Moraga “Art” 35). As a border artist, Lopez uses the stage to relieve herself of the burden of aloneness and understands the transformative power that marginalized groups can harness with such art. She believes that,

every story is about how the illusion of separateness, the lie of not being good enough, the lie of being separated and different, shatters us, and the attempts we make to become whole again ... Theater is about people having the courage to let the light come in, to clean up all the lies and distortions, and disconnection ... You see me. I see you. I'm finally being seen. I exist. (Lopez)

The courage that Lopez displays in publicly exposing her shame, allowing herself to be vulnerable to a large audience, makes her an heir to the powerful genealogy of the Pachuca.

The evolution of Chicana thought and politics also forged new ways for Chicanas to publicly and artistically challenge norms of gender conformity and sexuality. As stated above, *Real Women Have Curves* confronts the patriarchal system of values that positions specific body ideals as the measurement of women's worth, values that are deeply rooted in cultural and artistic representations like those of the female characters in *Zoot Suit*. Lopez's women are fearful of being deemed unworthy by the dominant culture and banished to silence and invisibility, much like Valdez's character of Bertha whose body is unacceptable because it is marked by the style and tattoos of the Pachuca; each of the characters of *Real Women* struggles with her weight, and unless their bodies conform to the ideal of the thin woman, they know that they will never be valued by men. Ana and Estela are constantly reminded by their mother, Carmen, that men will never find them attractive if they're fat, while Rosali, the thinnest of the bunch,

has made herself sick with diet pills but still cannot see herself as anything but fat.

Because the women's struggle with gender conformity in regards to their weight takes place in the setting of the garment factory, clothing becomes a symbol of those patriarchal beauty standards that they will never meet; it is in this symbolism that the Pachuca value of transformation takes shape.

Before the women can transform and redefine the "real" woman, they must first reject the gender expectations of thinness and beauty. This rejection is portrayed in the powerful scene where all of the women have stripped down to their underwear while also exposing and confronting all of the lies they have been told about weight:

ANA. Ama, I do want to lose weight. But part of me doesn't because my weight says to everyone, "Fuck you! ... How dare you try to define me and tell me what I have to be and look like!" ...

ESTELA. I thought he was interested in me because he was impressed that I owned this factory, my "intelligence," that I ... "I'm smart" ...
When am I going to meet a man who will see the real me? ...

ROSALI. I've felt fat since I can remember and I didn't want anybody to touch me until I got thin. (Lopez 2.3)

In this confession, the women unburden themselves to each other and to the audience in order to make room for their true identities. With all of the beautiful size seven dresses bearing witness, the women shed their clothing, and with it, the lies and gender expectations that keep them confined, until they finally see the beauty of "real" women:

PANCHA. *(suddenly realizing)*. Look how we are? What if somebody came in and saw us like this?

CARMEN. *(fanning her breasts)*. Pero que bien siente. It feels so good to be rid of these clothes and let it all hang out ...

ESTELA. So this is how we look without clothes?

CARMEN. Just as fat and beautiful ... *(They all hug in a semi-circle laughing triumphantly.)*

ANA. We can finally relax. (Lopez 2.3)

Once the women symbolically shed the gender expectations that have kept them confined in their own bodies, they can let their true selves “hang out” and relax in the knowledge that they are valuable outside of these expectations. They have given themselves permission to see and be seen, to feel good in exposing their fears and vulnerabilities, and even transform those body ideals into a literal garment that represents their true identity as “real women”:

(ESTELA is left alone ... She stops, recalling the five of them in their underwear, fantasizing about their own boutique. She grins to herself. She whispers.) Large sizes? (ESTELA shakes her head, dismissing the idea, but then stops and runs to a pile of stocked material ... ESTELA excitedly runs to a station and begins taking her measurements. As the lights slowly fade, we see ESTELA measuring herself with pride and pleasure, half

laughing to herself, half defiantly ... about to make her first dress). (Lopez 2.3)

By creating her first dress in her own image, Estela demonstrates that women can appropriate and transform the garments of a male-dictated identity into a source of pride and empowerment, that women can construct their own realities and define their own standards of beauty. The character of Estela represents “the female subject on display not only with regards to beauty, but also in relation to how she can be a participant and agent of change ...” (E. Ramirez 118). By the end of the play, the women’s dream of their own boutique becomes a material reality created for and by them exclusively.

Cherrie Moraga’s *Giving Up the Ghost* is another important play that explores both gender and sexual non-conformity and in which the Pachuca spirit of transformation is evident. As one of the first Chicana lesbian playwrights, Moraga writes of her own resistance to patriarchal gender expectations by creating lesbian characters whose very identities “resist[] the slave master’s imperialism in that one sphere of [] life. The lesbian has decolonized her body ... and has accepted the potential of mutuality in a lesbian relationship ...” (Clarke 126). Moraga uses the term *retrato* (portrait) as a substitute for acts, which dares “The People,” those watching or reading the play included in the character list, to see themselves within the representations. She titles each one to correspond to the different roles the women are fulfilling: *La Pachuca*, *La Loca* (the crazy one), and *La Salvadora* (the savior). There are three active characters in

the play that parallel the three portraits: Marisa is a Chicana in her 20's, Corky is Marisa's teenaged self, and Amalia is Marisa's older lover. Each of these women fulfill all and none of these roles simultaneously, which mirrors the non-linear form of the play that directs the reader to her portrayal of "a dissident femininity and female masculinity" (C. Ramirez 126). By portraying Corky/Marisa/*La Pachuca* as both masculinely strong yet femininely vulnerable, Moraga challenges the *Malinche* icon of "the penetrated one" and inverts gender roles, which is conveyed as Corky recounts her rape:

CORKY. I never cried as he shoved the thing

into what was supposed to be a mouth

with no teeth

with no hate

with no voice

only a hole

a hole!

He made me a hole! (Moraga *Giving Up* 3.10)

In this passage, Corky has lost her autonomy, her power, her voice, her ability to fight back, and has been reduced to objectivity; because of this, she admires men for their imperviousness and vows to never be vulnerable. Yet as Corky grows into Marisa, she struggles with her femininity and must learn to integrate the masculine and feminine into her queer sexuality. As she learns to love Amalia, a softly feminine woman who also

loves men, Marisa learns to love herself and her own femininity. She finds that she can be hard, be vulnerable, and be her own savior, *La Salvadora*, while still embracing a very masculine sense of sexuality. For Marisa, resistance to being made a “hole” takes place internally when she “put[s her] fingers to [her] own forgotten places” (Moraga *Giving Up* 3.12) and remembers how to be “whole.” Moraga’s challenge of the masculine and feminine binaries mirrors the challenge of the virgin/whore binaries of female representation, thus calling to mind the Pachuca spirit of transformation. These false dichotomies rupture in the face of Moraga’s queer representations, forcing the playwright, the audience, and the characters to reconstruct and reform themselves into autonomous new creations that do not conform to male-imposed binaries or sexuality (C. Ramirez 129).

Many Chicana playwrights continue to expose and harness the power of female relationships in every form, not exclusively in the romantic sense. Because the Chicano Movement forced women to work and fight together for mutual benefit, Chicana perceptions and relationships changed in ways that called for authentic representation in art and literature; the formation of Chicana alliances during the Movement is one important consequence and became a theme in Chicana drama. Because “the cultural practice of putting the males first [led] Chicanas to fear rejection and betrayal from other Chicanas” (Yarbro-Bejerano 393), this new way of relating to each other was a necessary artistic subject in order to counter the suspicion that patriarchy encouraged amongst Chicanas. Within the struggle for subjectivity, Chicanas developed a new trust

for each other and a deeper connection to other females that was totally separate from male relationships.

Evidence of this can be seen in an early work by Evelina Fernandez, *How Else Am I Supposed to Know I'm Alive*. This one-act play focuses on the sexual and familial lives of the characters Nellie and Angie, and in her artistic statement, Fernandez makes sure to specify that they are modeled after the relationships she witnessed amongst other Chicanas: "They represent the women I grew up around, my Mom, my Tias, their friends. Women who are full of life, love, pain, hope, and courage. Women who know that men can hurt you, but continue to look for love ... Women who love and support each other. Women who are human beings ..." (159). The characters find this support from each other after being abandoned by the men in their lives. Even God himself is portrayed as a malicious and selfish force who puts Nellie in the position of outsider because of her husband's death: "NELLIE. You took him without even thinking about how much I needed that man; how much I was gonna miss him. Without even caring that I belonged to him and that without him I don't belong" (Fernandez 160). The language of possession is evident in this passage, demonstrating a need for belonging that has been denied now that she is widowed and without a man; God has forced Nellie to reposition herself as subject and choose her own community and family. The death of her husband represents Nellie's own death within a gendered system of belonging and objectivity, and she now must rebirth herself and use her agency to create the life she wants. This is mirrored later in the play as her friend Angie seeks

Nellie's advice on a possible unplanned pregnancy, and they get excited about raising the baby themselves. Nellie and Angie have a female camaraderie that allows for the formation of a new family structure, one that is matriarchal, one in which men are superfluous, and one in which the female bond is central to their sense of belonging. The power of this relationship is underscored as Fernandez reveals that Nellie and her husband were unable to have children, while Angie has been forced to bear nine children with little to no help from her own husband who has since left. In her choice to bear yet another child for Nellie, she validates their relationship as the supreme source of power: "ANGIE. I wouldn't have it for any man ... None of them are worth the trouble. But you're my best friend and if you want this baby, I'll have it for you" (Fernandez 166). Even though their dream of raising a child together dies as Angie finds out that she's not pregnant, this cycle of death and rebirth conveys the possibilities that lie within strong female bonds, "the possibility for Chicanas to replace self-hatred with self-love and fear of betrayal with solidarity" (Yarbro-Bejerano 394). Together, Nellie and Angie instead birth an autonomous subjectivity that does not include the colonization of their bodies as reproductive machines. They are the agents of their own destinies, and the support and love they demonstrate toward each other is representative of the emancipatory power of female solidarity.

The characters of *Real Women Have Curves* also discover the untapped power of women who literally work together for a common goal. Though their labor, both paid and unpaid, is exploited in the dominant society, they see the value in their work and

support each other physically and monetarily. Throughout the play, Ana, the youngest and most auto-biographically written character, considers herself to be the most liberated and educated of the women, sometimes becoming frustrated with their submissiveness, but as she sees them sacrifice for each other, her perspective changes. In the final act, after sewing for more than twenty-four hours straight to finish an order, all of the women give up their paychecks to support Estela and keep her from getting deported, thus transforming their one source of individual power, the currency of their labor, into a collective dream: a boutique for women just like them. Ana's final monologue captures her epiphany and exemplifies the lesson of female solidarity:

ANA. I always took their work for granted, to be simple and unimportant.

I was not proud to be working there at the beginning. I was only glad to know that because I was educated, I wasn't going to end up like them ... But in their subtle ways they taught me about resistance.

About the battle no one was fighting for them except themselves ...

With their work that seems simple and unimportant, they are

fighting...Perhaps the greatest thing I learned from them is that

women are powerful, especially when working together. (Lopez 2.4)

The power of women's work and solidarity, while seemingly simple to an outsider like Ana, is complex in its ability to resist, as well as in its ability to create. While resisting the power of numerous patriarchal systems, the women also empower each other and themselves to realize a collective dream, again demonstrating "why Chicano theater is a

place where the struggle against the culture of the powerful is engaged” (Habell-Pallan 106). The Chicana playwright herself demonstrates female solidarity when telling the invisible stories of women like this, thus collectively exposing the invisible battles of the past and recognizing the power embodied in historical figures like the Pachuca as the foundation for future resistance. The power of female solidarity is another inheritance in the extraordinary genealogy of the Pachuca.

Recognizing the importance of presenting the full range of the Chicana experience on stage, playwrights Josefina Lopez, Lindsey Haley, and Elena Dominguez birthed the annual Chicanas, Cholas, y Chisme festival at Casa 0101 in which women are mentored in directing, writing, and acting and given the necessary resources for staging their stories. In her interview, Lopez expresses her admiration for Pachucas like Haley and Dominguez when she says, “I love the fact that the women had to be warriors, you know, and they had to fight for themselves. I even love the war paint,” (Lopez) but admits that she can’t tell their stories because it was not her own experience, so she began the festival to empower these women to tell their own stories, and also to battle against the male-dominated space of the theater, which has very few Chicana directors. When asked about the goal of her work, Haley responded that she wants to “give voice to our community, but also to create those bridges to try and diminish some of that ignorance.” Now in its fifth year, Chicanas, Cholas, y Chisme has become a vehicle of transformation, border-crossing, and female solidarity that truly exemplifies the power

of the Pachuca as an icon of resistance against oppressive patriarchal values and representations.

As she follows us into the twenty-first century, the Pachuca has much to offer and can be perceived as a quiet force who guides the Chicana artist beyond the confines of the virgin/whore representations that dominate the mainstream Chicano narrative. Decades of silencing have not stifled her power as an agent for change, but in suppressing her voice, Chicano history and culture stand to lose a very valuable ally in the fight against oppression. As Chicana playwrights continue to explore new ways to battle patriarchal structures, “we can see that the writing itself is a political act, just as the performance of the work is an act of empowerment” (E. Ramirez 103). When seen live, performance theater presents a unique vehicle in which the audience can experience the heart of the Chicana in a deeply personal and visceral way. As the Pachuca empowers the voice of the playwright, so the actors can empower and provoke the audience to enact change. Defying stereotypes and gender norms, invisible and silent no more, the power of the Pachuca resides in her authenticity apart from and in spite of patriarchy, as well as in her ability to transform and be transformed by Chicana playwrights.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Born out of a unique historical, cultural, and political environment, the Pachuca offers Chicanas and other women of color an important lesson in resistance. In crossing the borders of the streets, she challenged the demarcations between the public and private spheres, daring to be seen within a male-dominated space. Her body “refused to be contained by domesticity or limited by the prevailing orthodoxy of appropriate female behavior” (Fregoso “Homegirls” 320), making her a trespasser who forced the world to see her as an autonomous individual who transformed such gendered expectations and created a subjectivity free from the patriarchal constructs of proper female representation.

As the perpetual subject in progress, she “demonstrates the extent to which social identity is not stable but is, rather, a production that is fluid and provisional” (Fregoso “Homegirls” 323), yet her powers of transformation are not limited to her own identity. As an icon, she also represents the ability to transform the female cultural representations that serve to continue patriarchal oppression, representations like *la Malinche* and *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. While these icons serve to perpetuate the flat stereotypes of women as virgins, mothers, and whores, the Pachuca not only challenges such one-sided representations but also appropriates and employs them in the fight against the dominant oppressive culture. Her example of resistance is an inheritance of

strength and empowerment that can be traced through the Chicano Nationalist Movement and beyond.

Her influence is present in the work of such Chicana activists as Victoria Castro and Lindsey Haley. In their stories lie the spirit of the Pachuca, and they demonstrate the lessons she illustrates, lessons that Chicanos of the time ignored and devalued. Labeled *Malinches* and *vendidas*, Chicanas during the Movement who fought for inclusion and visibility and who pushed for equal attention to women's issues exemplified the next generation of border-crossing subjects in progress. "Mediated by gender, race, culture, and class, activism transforms individual conceptions of self" (Ruiz 128) as well as collective social identities, making the Chicana activist another incarnation of the Pachuca.

The values of female invisibility and silence dominated much of Chicano art, as demonstrated in Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit*. His female characters are representative of the *machismo* culture that keeps women hidden within the domestic sphere and upholds patriarchal dominance both within and outside of the home. While the stories of the Pachuco are worthy of telling, stories of Pachucas like Bertha Aguilar and the rest of the Sleepy Lagoon women are forced into silence and deemed worthless by the dominant culture: "Because she threatened *la familia de la Raza* and the traditional gender roles that it has reproduced and upon which it has been predicated, this figure was conspicuously absent in much movement-era cultural production" (C. Ramirez 119). Fortunately, the power of the Pachuca has transcended invisibility through the work of

Chicana artists who are courageous enough to step into the liminal border space within their art.

Chicana playwrights like Josefina Lopez, Evelina Fernandez, and Cherrie Moraga exemplify the Pachuca spirit in their work. By centering the Chicana voice and experience within the venue of the stage, they represent the Pachuca values of public visibility, transformation, and female solidarity, values that enable Chicanas to challenge silence and create an autonomous subjectivity apart from the patriarchal constructs of gender identity and expression. With their art, these women are “making aesthetic interventions that subvert cultural genocide” (Anzaldua 59) and keep the lineage of the Pachuca alive and strong. Chicana playwrights have the unique opportunity to appropriate the male-dominated space of the stage, another border to be publicly challenged and crossed, making them yet another heir to the powerful genealogy of the Pachuca.

After exploring the Pachuca’s influence in resistance and subjectivity, it is evident that she still has much to teach contemporary women of color. The political and social climate of the present-day United States continues to demonize people of color and perpetuate sexist ideologies and practices. “As was the case in World War II, Latinas and Latinos continue to represent an alien menace and social burden on the home front ...” (C. Ramirez 140) with immigrants and women bearing the brunt of a society that scapegoats anyone who does not adhere to the dominant ideals of race, gender, and nationalism. Stereotypes continue to abound in social and artistic representation of

women and Latinos, creating a climate of fear, distrust, and antagonism that shapes their cultural identity. When artists like Lopez present the truth of their experiences on the stage, on the page, and on the streets, the Pachuca's lineage endures and transforms to fit the needs of contemporary women. There is no doubt that as an icon, she will continue to revolutionize Chicana forms of resistance and art, birthing new incarnations and heirs to the women of discord.

WORKS CITED

WORKS CITED

- Acuna, Rodolfo F. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. Boston: Longman, 2011. Print.
- Alarcon, Norma. "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism." *Criticism in the Borderlands, Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*. Ed. Hector Calderon and Jose David Saldivar. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. 28-39. Print.
- . "Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-vision Through Malintzin/or Malintzin Putting Flesh Back on the Object." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015. 181-189. Print.
- Anzaldua, Gloria E. *Light in the Dark: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. Print.
- Blake, Debra J. *Chicana Sexuality and Gender: Cultural Refiguring in Literature, Oral History, and Art*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. Print.
- Broyles-Gonzalez, Yolanda. *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. Print.
- Castro, Victoria. Personal Interview. 10 June 2016.

- Clarke, Cheryl. "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015. 126-135. Print.
- Escobedo, Elizabeth R. *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Print.
- Fernandez, Evelina. *How Else Am I Supposed to Know I'm Still Alive. Contemporary Plays by Women of Color*. Ed. Kathy A. Perkins and Roberta Uno. New York: Routledge, 1996. 158-167. Print
- Fregoso, Rosa Linda. *The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. Print.
- . "Homegirls, Cholas, and Pachucas in Cinema: Taking Over the Public Sphere." *California History* 74.3 (1995): 316-327. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Jun 2015.
- . "Re-Imagining Chicana Urban Identities in the Public Sphere, Cool Chuca Style." *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*. Ed. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcon, and Minoo Moallem. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. 72-91. Print.
- Garcia, Alma M. "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970-1980." *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*. Ed. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicky L. Ruiz. New York: Routledge, 1990. 418-431. Print.

- Gutierrez, Ramon A. "Community, Patriarchy and Individualism: The Politics of Chicano History and the Dream of Equality." *American Quarterly* 45.1 (1993): 44-72. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 July 2016.
- Habell-Pallan, Michelle. *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Print.
- Haley, Lindsey. Personal interview. 1 Aug. 2016.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation." *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 210-222. Print.
- Lopez, Josefina. Personal interview. 8 June 2016.
- . *Real Women Have Curves. Real Women Have Curves and Other Plays*. Carlsbad: WPR Books, 2011. 20-73. Print.
- McWilliams, Carey. *North from Mexico*. New York: Praeger, 1990. Print.
- Moraga, Cherrie. "Art in America con Acento." *Negotiating Performance: Gender, Sexuality, and Theatricality in Latin/o America*. Ed. Diana Taylor and Juan Villegas. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994. 30-36. Print.
- . *Giving Up the Ghost. Heroes and Saints & Other Plays*. Albuquerque: West End Press, 1994. 4-35. Print.
- . *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca paso por sus labios*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2000. Print.

- Orozco, Cynthia. "Sexism in Chicano Studies and the Community." *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender*. Ed. Teresa Cordova, Norma Cantu, Gilberto Cardenas, Juan Garcia, and Christine M. Sierra. Colorado Springs: National Association for Chicano Studies, 1990. 11-18. Print.
- Ramirez, Catherine S. *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. Print.
- Ramirez, Elizabeth C. *Chicanas/Latinas in American Theatre: A History of Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. Print.
- Ruiz, Vicky L. *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Saldívar-Hull, Sonia. "Feminism on the Border: From Gender Politics to Geopolitics." *Criticism in the Borderlands, Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*. Ed. Hector Calderon and Jose David Saldívar. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. 203-220. Print.
- Valdez, Luis. *Zoot Suit. Zoot Suit and Other Plays*. Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1992. 23-94. Print.
- Yarbro-Bejarano, Yvonne. "The Female Subject in Chicano Theater: Sexuality, 'Race,' and Class." *Theater Journal* 38.4 (1986): 389-407. JSTOR. Web. 29 Jun. 2015.
- Zinn, Maxine Baca. "Political Familism: Toward Sex-Role Equality in Chicano Families." *The Chicano Studies Reader*. Ed. Chon Noriega, Eric R. Avila, Karen Mary Davalos,

Chela Sandoval, and Rafael Perez. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2001. 412-427. Print.