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Old English Modern Mestizaje

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OLD ENGLISH MODERN MESTIZAJE

A Thesis Presented

by

VICK QUEZADA

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OLD ENGLISH MODERN MESTIZAJE

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ABSTRACT

OLD ENGLISH MODERN MESTIZAJE

MAY 2018

VICK QUEZADA, B.A., THE UNIVERSITY OF EL PASO, TX.

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Directed by: Susan Jahoda

The following works are an exploration of the histories of colonization that Indigenous people experienced in North America and how the settler colonial phenomenon continues to exist in the contemporary United States. In this project I am placing “official” history alongside personal narrative in order to represent the overlooked experiences of those impacted by the colonial project in the southwest. Old English Modern Mestizaje acts to deconstruct the ideologies that create common sense notions of Mexico, Mexican American, Xicana/o/x and Mestizaje. With this project I am working to explore the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, capitalism and hetero patriarchy, as they affect the material realities of people whose lives are determined by their relationship to the border. Through the use of sculpture, experimental video, documentary photography, urban sculpture, earthenware, and performance this series means to draw our attention

to the ways we uphold and reconstruct institutions of power. I am most compelled by the places where evidence of resistance and survival is made manifest. With *Old English Modern Mestizaje* my desire is to generate alternative empathies that open paths for a new consciousness.

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CHAPTER 1

TESTIMONIO NO. 1, CE¹

Margarita and Jose were both first generation Mexican American citizens. They were married to each other and lived on a stretch of land in the U.S. territory of Texas. Their land was precisely located on the Texas Mexico Border in El Paso. From her yard, Margarita often looked towards the highway just passed the Rio Grande which separated the countries and told her grandchildren, “nosotros no nos cruzamos, se nos cruzó el bordo a nosotros” (we didn't cross the border the border crossed us).

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialism past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.²

Old English Modern Mestizaje, an installation of five separate but related artworks, are in dialogue with what the writer Eve Tuck calls the “settler colonial state.”³ Tuck describes the settler colonial state as a site that “can be visually understood as the unbroken pace of invasion, and settler occupation, into Native lands.”⁴ The works are inspired by complex structures of cultural hybridity, each piece interrogating how indigenous and settler histories, culture, and memory make meaning in 21st century North America. The dominant culture in the United States, and many other colonized nations, exercises an “...oppressive gender formation that rests on male supremacy without any clear understanding of the mechanisms by which heterosexuality, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart from each other.”⁵ The works in *Old English Modern Mestizaje* reflect these mechanisms through my lived experience. That is, my flesh is profoundly familiar with the legacies of social inequality and stratification. Included in the following paper are testimonios that

¹ Throughout the paper the anecdotes are listed by numerical order in Nahuatl.

² Hall, Stuart, ‘Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation’ in *Framework* (1989) 36:225

³ Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1

⁴ *Ibid*, 1

⁵ Lugones, María. "Heterosexuality and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007):187 .

describe the creation of a model, assimilated citizen and -- in juxtaposition with the works in *Old English Modern Mestizaje* -- deconstruct these socially constructed identities. Stuart Hall in a lecture he presented at the University Massachusetts at Amherst he succinctly describes this condition by saying “the only hope you have about power in representations is that it’s not going to be true and that tomorrow it is, in some way, going to make a slightly different sense of it, meaning is going to come out of the fixing and begin to loosen and fray.”⁶ This “loosening and fraying”⁷ in my work are the fibers within my practice, specifically the ritual practices in my performance work.

I have drawn upon the scholarly works of Maria Lugones, Walter Benjamin, and David L. Eng, amongst others who practice a close examination of history for ontological significance and who reckon with an “active and open relationship with the past.”⁸ This practice “...what Benjamin calls historical materialism-- is a creative process, animating history for future significations as well as alternative empathies.”⁹ The conceptualization and production of my projects then aim to be in dialogue with the continuous repression of narratives. The personal stories and memories that I hope to make visible.

With the increasing advancement in transgenerational epigenetics, one can understand the truth of the saying *that our ancestors are truly with us*. In his essay *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud states, “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which had taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.”¹⁰ The loss, in other words, by those who experience historical traumas due to colonization, war, and dislocation,

⁶ Hall, Stuart. "Representation & the Media." Lecture, UMASS, Amherst, (1997),19

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Eng, David L., and David Kazanjian. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Berkeley: University of California Press, (2008).pp. 1.

⁹ Ibid, pp.1.

¹⁰ Freud, Sigmund, *Mourning and Melancholia*. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV: On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, (1914-1916) pp.243

experience deep mourning, melancholia, nostalgia, sadness, trauma, and depression. These conditions are often pathologized, resulting in the suffering of whole generations who are blamed for circumstances that are not of their own making. For example, “The race-based traumatic stress theory, suggests that some racial and ethnic minority individuals experience racial discrimination as psychological trauma, as it may elicit a response comparable to posttraumatic stress.”¹¹ In addition, a recent study sought to understand how racialized trauma might incite feelings of disassociation. The findings revealed that “Racial and ethnic minority emerging adults who experience racial discrimination, possibly as traumatic, may be more vulnerable to dissociative symptoms.”¹²

I am interested in the psychological effects of colonisation and how trauma manifests in the bodies of those who are colonised. More specific in my work, I consider the mental process of disassociation and how it works as a survival strategy. *The Inheritance* is a twenty-one minute time-lapse video of sunlight casting an impression on the surface of a wall. A panel of sunlight enters the frame from the left and exits on the right, illuminating fragmented landscapes that appear and disappear with the light. This video footage represents the ways in which traumatic memories continuously flash before us and then disappear.¹³

¹¹ Polanco-Roman, L., A. Danies, and D. M. Anglin. "Racial Discrimination as Race-based Trauma, Coping Strategies, and Dissociative Symptoms among Emerging Adults." *Publication Med.* September 2016. Accessed May 08, 2018. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26963957>.

¹² Ibid

¹³ See Susan Jahoda's *...of a worm in a pomegranate* <http://www.susanjahoda.com/pomegranate-intro.html>

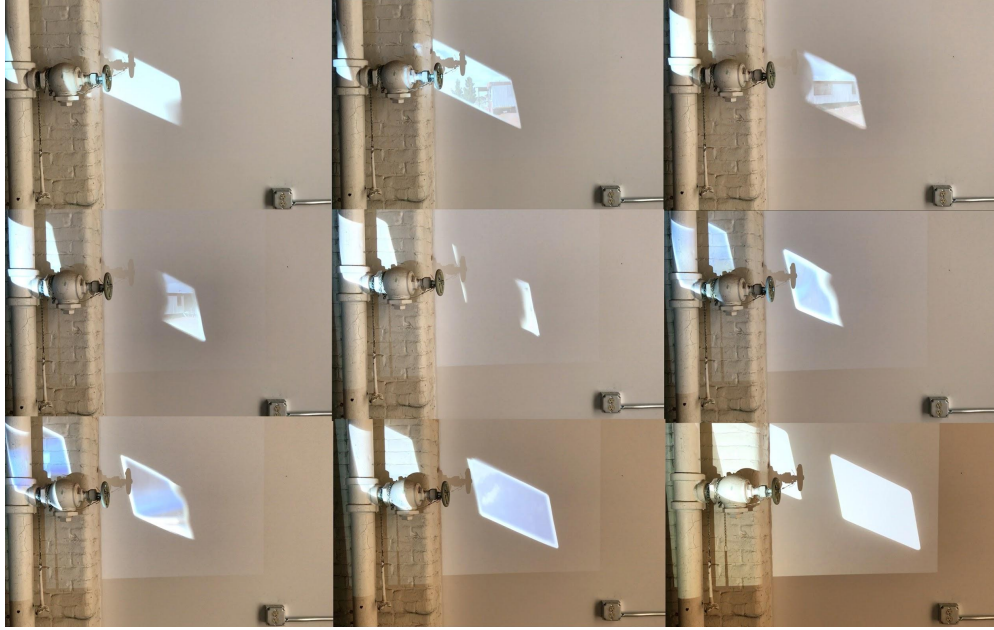


Figure 1, *The Inheritance*, looped video installation, 2018

CHAPTER 2

TESTIMONIO NO. 2, OME

In 1940, Juan Minjarez, a supposed "first generation" U.S citizen served in U.S. Military. He fought in World War II at Normandy, France where he was a medic in his platoon. Second hand accounts corroborate that under heavy insurgent attack Juan placed his life in jeopardy and saved many American soldiers lives. As a measure to his performance Jose was awarded a Purple Heart for his valor and bravery. After Juan was honorably discharged from service to the United States Army Juan returned home from war to adjust to his life as a civilian where he would return home to start a family. Juan married Margarita

On March 4, 1517, Bernal Diaz, a Spaniard and a soldier in the conquest of Mexico wrote his story in *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de Nueva España*. Spaniards and Amerindians were fascinated by each other on first encounter. The Amerindians sought to know if the Spaniards were prophets and if they had come "...from where the sun rises."¹⁴ Bernal Diaz's account constitutes the "official" record of what took place when the Spanish encountered the Aztecs. This particular example is one of many in which history and truth are narrated by the colonizing nation. European settlers, then and now, continue to trivialize, romanticize or deny Indigenous histories and, in some cases, the existence of Indigenous peoples. In the United States Mestizos are denied representation as an Indigenous group by the state and by other Indigenous tribes within the United States. The myth of the vanishing Indian justifies settler colonialism and it persists to erase and personify the Indigenous American as a mystical presence. The absence of Indigenous representation haunts Bernal Diaz's account. It is this absence, like the return of the repressed, that is central to the installation *The Private is Political*. According to Gordon "...a haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life [...] [it is] an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely"¹⁵

¹⁴ Castillo, Bernal Díaz Del, Albert E. Idell, and Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas. *The Bernal Díaz Chronicles: The True Story of the Conquest of Mexico*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, (1957), 31.

¹⁵Gordon, Avery F. "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity." *Borderlands* 10, no. 2, 1-21. Accessed 2011.

The Private is Political consists of a temporary housing structure that measures 10ft. x 8ft. and is framed by 2x4 lumber. The gallery wall functions as the backside of the home. A black mesh tarp is used to cover the front, left and right sides, as well as the roof and pitch of the structure. There is no entry or exit for viewers, they can only see what is within through the small perforated holes in the black mesh. Inside is a looped silent black and white film of the Spanish inquisition projected onto the interior of the brick wall. Also, there is an Aztec inspired sofa, and a coffee table with Life and National Geographic magazines. This installation depicts a domestic sphere and illustrates how, in fact, the private becomes political. Ideological agendas infiltrate the most private of places, our homes and our minds. *The Private is Political* references two types of space; the interiority of domestic space and the inner mind where our perceptions construct “common sense”.¹⁶ The couch is upholstered with fabric that is mass produced and culturally appropriated from Indigenous designs. The silent film, *The Woman God Forgot*, was created by Cecil B. De Mille a classic film producer who made over 70 features, which included a multitude of westerns.¹⁷ The film was edited down from 60 minutes to 3:21 and was reversed so it played backward, denying the gratuitous violence acted out by the Spaniards. Hollywood films, specifically westerns idealize racist stereotypes and advanced concepts such as manifest destiny which rationalizes settler colonialism and allows for it to thrive and reproduce. Similarly certain magazines publications, particularly National Geographic, have a charged past. Of note, the new editor to National Geographic apologized for the exotification, stereotyping and racialization of various ethnic groups.

<http://www.averygordon.net/files/GordonHauntingFuturity.pdf>

(xvi)

¹⁶ “Common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It is the "folklore" of philosophy, and, like folklore, it takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental character is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential.” Antonio Gramsci, Selections From The Prison Notebooks, (London: Elec Books), 1999. <http://abahlali.org/files/gramsci.pdf>

¹⁷ "DeMille, Cecil B.." Business Leader Profiles for Students. . *Encyclopedia.com*. (May 8, 2018). <http://www.encyclopedia.com/education/economics-magazines/demille-cecil-b>

My interest in using film in the *Private is Political* has been shaped by artists who tackle the subjects of colonization and the legacies of white supremacy. The works of Kara Walker and Simone Leigh, *Thatched Hut* have been inspirational.¹⁸



Figure 2, *The Private is Political*, looped video installation, 2018

¹⁸Leigh, Simone. *Thatched Hut*. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.
<http://globalgraphica.com/2016/10/26/thatched-hut-video-art-installation-by-simone-leigh-hammer-museum-los-angeles/>



Figure 3, *The Private is Political*, looped video installation, 2018

CHAPTER 3

TESTIMONIO NO. 3, YEI

In 1955, 11 year old Patricia, was a 5th grader at Cadwalder Elementary in El Paso, Texas. Patricia's classmate Delia struggled with English. Patricia spoke English and Spanish so she felt compelled to translate the instructions to Delia. Ms. Brown, the teacher vehemently opposed students from translating and warned Patricia that if she continued to assist Delia she would be reprimanded. Patricia continued to translated for her Delia despite the repercussions. Ms. Brown suspected this and interrupted their exchange. Ms. Brown ordered Patricia to stand in the front of the class, she instructed Patricia to extend her arms away from her body. Ms. Brown took a ruler and struck Patricia's hands. In horror and certain this was an unjust act Patricia reported the incident to her father Jose. Jose listened to Patricia's concerns but, ultimately had no sympathy for her, because rules are rules.

Colonizers exert dominance over Indigenous bodies to ensure complete control over political agendas that essentially control land, people, and law. Prior to the arrival of European settlers to North America, Indigenous people spoke many languages. It is difficult to prove just how many languages “were being spoken in North America around AD 1500” however “it is widely accepted that there were over 400 distinct languages....”¹⁹ Three centuries of Spanish colonial expansion into the Americas promoted the disappearance of these languages and Spanish became the official language. In the 1800’s Spanish clergy in Texas had orders from the governor of Nueva Espana, a colonial territory of Spain, “to incline and direct the Indians...to the study of the Spanish language.”²⁰ Lera Boroditsky, a cognitive scientist shares, “The structures that exist in our languages profoundly shape how we construct reality...”²¹ Christopher Columbus understood the power of language, “I shall have the language taught to one of my people [a Spaniard], for I can see that so far the same language is spoken everywhere. Then it will be possible to find out which things are useful

¹⁹ Muckle, Robert James. *Indigenous Peoples of North America: A Concise Anthropological Overview*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012, 72.

²⁰ Castaneda, Carlos. *The mission Era: The Missions at Work, 1731-1761*. Volume III, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936*, (Austin, Texas: Boeckmen- Jones) 1938, 33.

²¹ Boroditsky, Lera. "Lost in Translation." *The Wall Street Journal*. July 23, 2010. Accessed May 08, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703467304575383131592767868>.

and to convert these people to Christianity.”²² The colonizers believed that through religious conversion the Indigenous people would become loyal servants to Spain. Essentially meaning that if the Indigenous learned how to communicate effectively with the Spaniards through a common language (Castilian Spanish) it would promote religious conversion and therefore they would become faithful subjects to the Spanish crown.

The majority of Spanish settlers to the new world were men and they settled in various Spanish controlled territories, fathering children with the Amerindian. Inevitably the miscegenation of the Spaniard and Indigenous forebear the Mestiza/o. Spanish subjects who were of Indigenous, Jewish, African, Moorish blood were denied personhood, this was reinforced through Spanish colonial law known as *Limpieza de Sangre*. Spain began tracking ancestry for blood quantum which promoted racial purity that essentially created a caste system.²³ This measure was a way Spanish law reinforced a hierarchical class system. Stuart Hall expands his thought,

*“The coloniality of power introduces the basic and universal social classification of the population of the planet in terms of the idea of “race.” The invention of “race” is a pivotal turn as it replaces the relations of superiority and inferiority established through domination. It re-conceives humanity and human relations fictionally, in biological terms.” “It also makes conceptual room for understanding the historical disputes over control of labor, sex, collective authority and inter-subjectivity as developing in processes of long duration, rather than understanding each of the elements as pre-existing the relations of power. The elements that constitute the global, Eurocentered, capitalist model of power do not stand in separation from each other and none of them is prior to the processes that constitute the patterns. Indeed, the mythical presentation of these elements as metaphysically prior is an important aspect of the cognitive model of Euro Centered, global capitalism.”*²⁴

The most effective method of conversion was through religion. The Virgin Mary, also known as the Virgen de Guadalupe appeared before Juan Diego in 1531 and spoke to him in Nahuatl, saying she was the mother of god. Juan Diego described the holy apparition as having brown skin, ironically

²² Columbus, Christopher. *The Voyage of Christopher Columbus: Columbus's own Journal of Discovery*, Trans. by John Cummins (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 94.

²³ Martinez, Maria Elena. "The Black Blood of New Spain: Limpieza De Sangre, Racial Violence, and Gendered Power in Early Colonial Mexico." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (July 2004): 479-520. doi:10.2307/1919488, 480.

²⁴ Lugones, María. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007):189.

appearing similar to Tonantzin “our mother” who is an Indigenous deity.²⁵ Juan Diego’s encounter is credited with the mass Catholic conversion of Indigenous people in Mexico. Scholars contest this allegation and claim that the Virgen de Guadalupe may have been fabricated to strategically expand Spanish conversion.



Figure 4, *Shopping Cart No. 1*, Mixed-media, variable dimensions, 2017

Indigenous peoples’ believe that land is an extension of the human body. Their cosmology included a holistic understanding of the universe whereby “...the human body (was not understood in isolation from the existence of the gods or the centrality of the plants, animals, and earth.”²⁶ Additionally, Indigenous peoples’ economic practices were solely based on equal trade, rather than being guided by a desire for profit. Settler colonialism replaced equal trade with capital and labor economies, radically

²⁵ Tonantzin translates from Nahuatl to English as “our mother.”

²⁶ Sigal, Peter Herman. *The Flower and the Scorpion: Sexuality and Ritual in Early Nahuatl Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, (2012), 4

altering the Indigenous way of life. The mechanisms that dominated the body through language, biology, law, land and religion served, and continue to serve as apparatuses of domination.

The shopping cart series functions to remind viewers of Indigenous peoples forced estrangement from their lands and traditions. Weaving, cooking, music, and agriculture, for example, are culturally connected to place, but due to Indigenous displacement they were practiced in nomadic contexts.

The *Shopping Cart Series* incorporates weaving, cooking, music, and agriculture into mobile units, addressing both homelessness and survival. *Shopping Cart No.1*, is a gold chromed, steel basket with recycled cotton t-shirt strips that are woven into the body of the cart. Weaving is an ancient practice of the Nahuatl (Aztec); their blankets and clothing were spun from native plant fibers. Inside the cart on the lower shelf is a mound of dirt that serves as a soil bed for growing maize.. An artificial ultraviolet light supplies the corn with the necessary nutrients needed to grow. A gold metallic boom box adorns the front of the cart.



Figure 5, *Shopping Cart No.2*, Mixed -media, dimensions variable, 2017

Shopping Cart No.2 includes air-casted wheels that provide greater mobility and a gate that latches open and closed to more easily access the insides of the cart. The cart has two large umbrellas, creating shade for the cart operator. A transportable table attaches to the side that provides counter space for a portable Coleman propane stove that can cook traditional foods like Tamales--an Ancient Indigenous cuisine.. Within the bed of the cart there is a wood pallet reconstructed as a shelf. This is used for food production and preparation. *Cart No.2* also has recycled t-shirt strips, woven into the bed of the cart, as well as elaborate gears that operate on a car battery. The battery generates electricity to power a 200 watt stereo system that jams to the looped beat of the Kumbia Queens. Cumbia is a Latin-American dance, practiced originally by African slave populations in the coastal regions of Columbia. This music became very popular throughout Latin America and eventually became known worldwide. It was primarily listened to by working and “lower class” people. The

cart's roaring beats fill spaces with the overwhelming presence of latinidad and resistance. I am aware of the contradictions inherent in the use of the shopping cart as a sculptural form; its references to both commerce and homelessness and also the potential for romanticizing the marginalized experience of poverty and suffering.

The lands that my ancestors inhabited is now known as Northern Mexico and Texas. Altogether six flags have reigned over Texas: Spain, France, Mexico, Republic of Texas, Confederate States of America and the United States of America. Laurato states, "The conquest of American territory and of its inhabitants, and its incorporation into the domains of the Spanish crown was the work of feudal conquerors...has been carried forward under the sign of the cross of Christ."²⁷

²⁷ Moreno, Nahuel. "Feudalism and Capitalism in the Colonization of America."
[https://www.marxists.org/archive/moreno/1948/Feudalism and Capitalism in the Colonisation of America.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/moreno/1948/Feudalism%20and%20Capitalism%20in%20the%20Colonisation%20of%20America.pdf).
(2015), 3

CHAPTER 4

TESTIMONIO No. 4, NAHUI

Patricia's daughter Margaret came into her identity in grade school. Her textbooks told her she was of Indigenous and Spanish ancestry. She aligned solely with the Spaniard and in her early twenties she tattooed a passage on the arch of her foot that she saw carved into a rock. The passage was written in the 18th century by a Spaniard who etched this passage on a rock in El Morro, New Mexico: "Paso or aqui", passed through here.

The Oxford English Dictionary's definition for discipline is: "The practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behaviour, using punishment to correct disobedience."²⁸ Hegemonic dominance has inevitable results, The National Clearing on Family Violence, Marackle states:

*A consequence to colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural genocide; the learned negative, cumulative, multi generational actions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral patterns practiced by one or more people that weakens or destroy the harmony and well-being of Aboriginal individual, family, extended family, community or nationhood.*²⁹

Table Remains, is a social commentary on the role that institutions have in reinforcing and reproducing values through disciplinary practices. The standard, mass produced, cafeteria table is designed for quick and uncomfortable consumption. The trays designed to organize and control food proportions. Both are generally used in schools, prisons and other institutions. In *Table Remains*, the clay cafeteria trays are hand pressed from a mold then both kiln and barbecue pit fired. Sixteen of these trays are displayed on a cafeteria table wrapped with muslin cloth to resist the rigid surface and emphasize the trays. An adjacent large shelving unit, also wrapped in Muslin cloth, holds eighteen trays and, laterally, a stainless steel tray table holds an additional fourteen trays.

The constructed shelves refer to the service industry, where repetition, containerization, and invisible labor enable production on a large scale. Each of the individualized trays negates disposability and

²⁸ "Discipline | Definition of Discipline in English by Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries | English. Accessed May 08, 2018. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/discipline>.

²⁹ *For Generations to Come: The Time Is Now: A Strategy for Aboriginal Family Healing: A Final Report of the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee.* Toronto, Ont.: Committee. *Unpublished Final Report.* (1993), 6.

because of their unique variations in form and tone. They are demonstrating the unique identity of the individuals who endure these disciplinary regimes. To relegate marginalized people solely as victims is reductive and it can also create the idea that people are incapable of having agency, essentially diminishing and dehumanizing the individual. In fact, we all have agency. Of course power and structures influence the capacity of the individual, regardless, people have varying degrees of agency in thought and being. Fred Moten expands the ways that we can exercise our agency through the power we possess. In *The Undercommons Fugitive Planning and Black Study* Moten writes:

*...She disappears into the underground, the downlow low-down maroon community of the university, into the undercommons of enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong.*³⁰

The University is not the only location where an “undercommons of enlightenment”³¹ exists, more broadly it extends into other bureaucratic, corporate, and non-profit sectors. Moten’s words are important reminders that broadly each of us in various capacities have agency and power. By recognizing the resources that we individually and collectively possess, we can begin to reallocate resources that can redistributed and used to create small and systemic change.

³⁰ Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. *The undercommons: fugitive planning & black study*. (2013), 25.

³¹ Ibid, 25.



Figure 6, *Table Remains*, Mixed-media, variable dimensions, 2017-18

Colonialist structural systems, particularly the Christian faith, public education, and prison institutions, have had an indirect and direct impact on me, my family, my communities, and our lands. Thelathia Nikki Young in *Black Queer Ethics, Family and Philosophical Imagination* forwards,

*“To be sure, the regulatory power of the “family” has extended beyond the care and provision of children to include the stabilizing and normalizing- and even protection- of heteropatriarchal sexuality and gender roles....In turn, family has been understood in various contexts as the originator and perpetuator of highly values social scripts related to gender and sexuality.”*³²

Growing up (unknowingly) we regularly watched a conservative news outlet that formed our commonsense ideas about the world at large. Discipline and force maintained and prioritized heteropatriarchy and Christian norms. These norms were, and still are, privileged, undermining the women in my family. The values I was expected to adopt were diametrically opposed to my selfhood as an agnostic, queer, brown, person. In the *Souls of Black Folk* W.E.B. Du Bois describes the concept of “double consciousness” in this way. “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this

³² Slate, N. *Prism of Race: W.e.b. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and the Colored World of Cedric ...* Dover. Place of Publication Not Identified: Palgrave Macmillan, (2016), 15.

sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity...³³

Accepting someone else's truth takes a lifetime to unlearn. The works and testimonios in *Old English Modern Mestizaje* are, for me, about this unlearning and the reclaiming of my truths.

³³ Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (1903), 3

CHAPTER 5

TESTIMONIO NO. 5, MACUILLI

Patricia and Fernando converted from Catholicism to a millinerian Christianity, they were devout followers and attended several meeting a week. Every Saturday, rain or shine the loyal Christian family of seven were out evangelizing the word of god from door to door. "True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous but it is painful: yet afterward, it yields the peaceable food of righteousness and to those who have been trained by it."³⁴.



Figure 7, La Maize, Mixed Media, 2018

The sculptural object, *La/El Maize*, is where botany, historical accounts, Indigenous doctrine and thought come together. Maize is a monoecious plant, meaning that it has both feminine and masculine parts; the ear and silk are feminine and the tassel is male. These classifications seem arbitrary. In response, *La/El Maize*, connects an ear of corn to a harness to suggest a sex object.

³⁴ *Hebrews*. In *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, (2013),12:11.

La/El Maize incorporates the ancient craft of weaving, its design is intended for wear. Scholars argue that in Nahua culture the figure Centeotl, the corn god, is also known as Chicomecoatl the corn goddess. This god/dess, challenges the gender binary and is known for guarding over life and reproduction. The scholarship of Maria Lugones and Judith Butler are helpful in situating *El/La Maize* and *The White Ball and Chain*. Lugones asserts that “The heterosexualist patriarchy has neen an ahistorical framework of analysis. To understand the relation of the birth of the colonial/modern gender system to the birth of global colonial capitalism--with the centrality of the coloniality of power to that system of global power--is to understand our present organization of life...”³⁵

The Balls and Chain was a performance held at the opening show, *Old English Modern Mestizaje*. It entailed the use of my body, a non-binary transgender body, as a political vessel. I nonchalantly walked around the gallery space wearing huaraches(ancient sandals), gold brushed toenails and an accentuated stainless steel chain that was wrapped around my ankle and connected to a pair of white, 8 inch long, thick plastic testicles, called Truck Nuts. This entire apparatus was clamped together by a padlock. Truck Nuts are tough plastic testicles that are marketed online as having “Great Style... Great Vein Structure³⁶” and their target audience is men with vehicles. I have primarily seen them connected to the back end of trucks. These Nuts are a spectacle of hyper-masculinity and paired up with my gender non-conforming body they create tension. With every step I took throughout the space the clank and clamor of the chains and the dragging testicles echoed the absurd nature of the performance. making Maria Lugones critiques on the modern colonial gender structure everso apparent. I was striving to create the effect of the “ball and chain” by symbolically gesturing how the gender binary is constructed to uphold the patriarchy.

³⁵ Lugones, María. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007):187

³⁶Your Nuts. "Truck Nuts Truck Balls Bull Nutz 8". Advertisement. Amazon Prime. 2018.
<https://www.amazon.com/Truck-Nuts-Balls-Nutz-Black/dp/B002W30A4E>.

CHAPTER 6

TESTIMONIO NO. 6, CHICUACE

Margarita Minjares' brother, Hilario "Larry" Silva's feminine identity was never acknowledged, let alone accepted. When Larry was a teenager he stole his father's silver dollars and survived a severe beating that after the assault Larry ran away from his home never to return. Larry eventually found his way out west ending up in Los Angeles where he lived his life openly gay and passed away in 2008.

"The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information... the erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire."

□ Audre Lorde, *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*

The erotic is deeply centered in womanhood, addressing those with feminine energy who are also oppressed by patriarchy. The erotic is a basic element of our "true self."³⁷ It tethers us to who we are and it is a locale where empowerment and our individual 'truths' are situated. The state apparatus interpolates the subject but the power of the erotic, found within the marginalized individual, threatens these social structures.

I incorporate Audre Lorde's description of the erotic into my bodies of work specifically in *Old English Modern Mestizaje*. As a participant in this photo project, my biological sister chose the phrase, "Living

³⁷Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing (Press, 2015), 53



Figure 8, *Old English Modern Mestizaje*, Mixed Media, 2018

Unapologetically.” This phrase summarizes the meaning of this project. A collaborative endeavor, it features members of the Joteria (Gay) Community that are queer Xicanx and allies, and others from across the United States. Each phrase was made into a customized plaque. Each plaque was laser cut out of MDF, then spray painted gold. The phrases themselves varied in content and language. In fact, three separate languages Spanish, English and Nahuatl were offered. The plaques were mailed and hand delivered to participants with a directive, “capture a digital image of how you would like to be represented.” The installation required: two overhead projectors and a file cabinet where the photographic transparencies were filed. Participants had an opportunity to choose which photographic transparencies they would like to project onto the wall. This experimental photographic work channels the documentary photography of the late Laura Aguilar and her portraits from the early 90’s as well as Catherine Opie’s work, in her *The Regents Project*.

Within the United States there are a multitude of Indigenous identifications. I am speaking primarily about Indigenous peoples that were colonized by multiple generations of European settlers -- from a wide range of European countries -- this violent encounter resulted in the conception of the Mestiza/o, Mexican, Mexican American and the Xicana/o's. The cultural hybridities that emerged from the centuries-long confrontation between European settlers and Indigenous communities are made evident in many areas, yet this discussion focuses on language. In the home that I grew up in, the sounds of Spanish, English, and fragments of Nahuatl could be heard. My grandparents primarily spoke Spanish with intermittent phrases of Nahuatl; my parents predominant language was Spanish but they relied on English when speaking in public. My primary language is English and I picked up Spanish by talking with my grandmother. My parents did not teach me or my siblings Spanish because they believe that speak Spanish would inhibit our progress in school. My sister's children no longer speak Spanish and certainly do not recognize that their grandparents speak an ancient language.

The code-switching between English and Spanish is seen as improper and illegitimate. Similarly, the hybridity of Indigenous and European cultures disrupts legitimized racial binaries within the United States. By addressing the violent legacy of erasure that Native American people were subjected to by European settlers, I am working to understand the manner in which Indigenous people safeguard their communities as a means for self-preservation, even from a person like me who has indigenous roots. Both Indigenous and European traditions have formed the primary elements of Mestizas and Mestizos. Hundreds of years ago my ancestors lost their sole identity as Indigenous people through European conquest. Indigenous traditions and language subtly have transcended into my being, however my identity is not recognized or acknowledge broadly as indigenous. The implemented structures of white supremacy are exclusionary and thus enacts an ideology of "divide and conquer" within the margins, leaving the center to rule the land. The hierarchical power structures of oppression rely on the delegitimization of racialized groups including the Mestiza/o, Mexican,

Mexican American and the Xicana/o's. To concede to these structures upholds white supremacy and reinforces the inferiority of all marginalized people. The trilingual nexus of Spanish, English, and Nahuatl that is spoken among Mestiza/o's has metamorphosed into the singular language and identity, authentic to a specific group of people--the center of our identity.

CHAPTER 7

TESTIMONIO NO. 7, CHICOME

Husband of Patricia, Fernando nonchalantly uses the word agüitado, zacate, aguacate, Fernando didn't realize that these words and others are words of a language called Nahuatl until Margaret revealed this to him. Nahuatl is a lingua franca from the ancient Aztec Empire.

On a daily basis, we engage in the production and reproduction of culture. For example, systems of consumption, social interactions, and common sense behavior serve to reinforce ideologies that oppress and render the margins invisible. We are all subjects in a very complex society that's determined to divide us by differences and create hierarchical value systems. The works in the art show *Old English Modern Mestizaje* are installed so that they create a dialogue with each other. The conversation that emerges in the show has historical references as it speaks to the contemporary moment within the U.S. I am working to address the ways that settler colonialism influences our collective ways of seeing and being as I am exploring the power of representation to enact resistance. Before entering the main gallery in *Old English Modern Mestizaje*, visitors were greeted by the sound of Cumbias coming from Cart No. 2. At the gallery entrance to the left is the second cart. The cafeteria trays and house are at the far end of the gallery and the corn harness is to its right. The work, *Old English Modern Mestizaje*, is centrally located. The sunlight, corn, the shopping carts, the cafeteria trays and table, the home, film and magazines, filing cabinets, the overhead projector and transparencies are all objects that the majority of us have encountered in public spaces, institutions, our homes, and outdoors. The objects function is responding to the demands of society, where the artworks in *Old English Modern Mestizaje* are responding to these demands but also working to challenge our common understanding of the culture we exist in.

The determination to exist and be seen are the common threads that string these bodies of work together. Without representation, people are left to society's preconceived notions that form the 'other'. To make art is to stand firm for future generations so that they see themselves in their image.

The practice of making art and having that art circulate in culture creates the room for for awareness to grow and dialogue to take place in mass culture, and perhaps to inspire resistance to oppressive structures.

The ancient words of Nahuatl: avocado, chili, coyote, chocolate have endured through centuries. The resilience of these words are reminders that representation holds power and over time can change. Stuart Hall affirm, “power in representations is that it’s not going to be true and that tomorrow it is, in some way, going to make a slightly different sense of it, meaning is going to come out of the fixing and begin to loosen and fray.”³⁸The “fraying and the loosening”³⁹requires a determination to exist to dream and create a new consciousness.

Testimonio No. 8, Chicuye

Sometimes leaving everything you know might be the only chance you get at finding your truth. When the opportunity presented itself Margaret and their three sisters left their birth home in El Paso. The three sisters currently reside in Albuquerque and Margaret now lives in Massachusetts where they make art, and they no longer identify as Margaret.

³⁸Hall, Stuart. "Representation & the Media." Lecture, UMASS, Amherst, (1997), 19

³⁹Ibid

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PHOTO OF THE ARTIST OF WORK



IMAGE IDENTIFICATION

1. *The Inheritance*, Video, 2018
2. *The Private is Political*, Mixed Media, 2018
3. *Cart No.1*, Mixed Media, 2017
4. *Cart No.2*, Mixed Media, 2017
5. *Table Remains*, Mixed Media, 2018
6. *La/El/X Maize*, Mixed Media, 2018
7. *Old English Modern Mestizaje*, Mixed Media, 2018
8. *Artist at Work*, 2018