Urban Chicanx/Latinx Art and Cultural Production in Phoenix, Arizona

"Mujeres del desierto": Cultural Identity, Eco-somaesthetics, and Urban Space in the Work of Stella Pope Duarte, La Morena, and Annie Lopez

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved July 2020 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2020

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores contemporary Chicanx/Latinx art and cultural production in Phoenix, Arizona and its role in shaping and asserting a cultural identity and experience that is unique to this area of the southwestern United States. I examine the work of three female creatives spanning three generations who have used their art to represent, mitigate, and embody their experiences as Chicanx/Latinx subjects living in the Borderlands: Stella Pope Duarte (b. 1948), Lucinda Y Hinojos (La Morena) (b. 1981), and Annie Lopez (b. 1958). Through an examination of their artistic production traversing various media, including literature, urban art, and photography, I seek to show how they embrace the aesthetic activism and ideals of the Chicano Art Movement set within a contemporary context, while dialoguing with the local and global discourses that inform their realities.

The theoretical framework I employ is grounded in principles surrounding body-space-place, specifically the notions of Somaesthetics (Shusterman 1996), Barriology-Barrioization (Villa 2000), and Thirdspace (Soja 1996). These theories are contextualized within the framework of borderland theory and Chicanx feminism, utilizing borderland spaces as a trope to combat traditional power structures and dichotomies while exploring the complexity and fluidity of transborder identities. I maintain that their work has contributed to Phoenix's social and material landscapes through the articulation of a space/place-specific, hybrid Borderland identity grounded in the social, ecological, and physical realities of life in the "Valley of the Sun." This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that their artistic expressions contribute to uniting and empowering the Chicanx/Latinx

community through the definition of a Latinx space that is both physical and imaginary, allowing for self-representation, cultural affirmation, and collective healing. Overall, this dissertation contributes to an urgent gap in academic research surrounding Chicanx/Latinx cultural and artistic production in Phoenix. I hope to honor the presence and contributions of a long-established community and stimulate further investigation on this topic, proving that there *is* something worth talking about here in Phoenix.
KEYWORDS: Chicanx, Latinx, Chicanx art, contemporary art, Phoenix, Arizona, cultural identity, community, muralism, urban space, spatial studies, Chicanx literature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and encouragement of an expansive community of people who have impacted my life in various ways, far too many to list here.

I am very grateful for my committee members, Dr. Jesús Rosales, Dr. Carlos Javier García-Fernández, Dr. Manuel Aviles-Santiago, and the late Dr. David William Foster for having provided me with ample support and assistance during my time at Arizona State University. I express my deepest gratitude to my chair Dr. Jesús Rosales for his patience, open-mindedness, and positivity during this process. As my professor and committee chair, his encouragement has enabled me to grow academically (both as a student and teacher) and intellectually. He has been the example of the educator and, perhaps more importantly, human being that I strive to be. I would also like to thank Dr. García-Fernández, Dr. Aviles-Santiago, and Dr. Foster for going above and beyond their committee obligations and providing me profound insight that has allowed me to substantially improve my dissertation. Their exemplary commitment to graduate students is something I will never forget. Sadly, Dr. Foster passed just before my defense but I am happy to have had the opportunity to share this work with him. In addition to being a wonderful, kind, and dedicated mentor, he was one of the first people to introduce me to Pope Duarte's work. His scholarship on Phoenix was a great inspiration to me and he will be greatly missed by all of us.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the incredible work of Stella Pope Duarte, La Morena, and Annie Lopez, as well as Sam Fresquez, Melissa

Dunmore, Diana Calderon, Chela Chelinski, and Las Chollas Peligrosas. Words cannot express my appreciation for your openness and willingness to participate in this project. As individuals, you exemplify the passion, tenacity, and spirit of collaboration that I aspire to emulate in my own life.

My time as a graduate student at Arizona State University has been marked by the special human beings I have had the pleasure to meet along the way; especially Bárbara, Rosita, Xiomara, Ofelia, Angélica, Valeria, Kerry, Nancy, Nayibe, Czarina, Gabriela, and Miriam. Your friendship has been a great source of support and I cherish it very much. My students at ASU, Benedictine University, and Rio Salado Workplace Education (especially our DACA students and Dreamers) have been a constant source of motivation and inspiration for me and have played an enormous role in my decision to return to academia and complete this dissertation. You have all taught me much more than I could ever teach you.

I am eternally grateful to my friends and family (both near and afar) for their unwavering support in everything I do. I am particularly indebted to my best friends who have served as my constant support system, inspiration, and (free) therapists for most of my life: Lina, Olivia, Kiz. I do not know what I would do without you. Maria Ángeles, Lisa, Katie, and Maria Granic, you are some of my greatest role models both professionally and personally, and your encouragement has helped me greatly during the difficult times. Last but never least, my family (both Bondi and Daluiso) has been enormously supportive over the years. You were my first teachers and I am grateful to have had such strong role models who have made many sacrifices over the course of their

lives so that I wouldn't have to. Especially my parents, who have always put my education first –my dad has always been ahead of his time and (perhaps unknowingly) taught me to be a feminist. Without you, I wouldn't have thought any of this was possible. This dissertation is dedicated to Fernando, the greatest partner in every aspect of my life and my biggest cheerleader. None of this would have been possible without you and this achievement is as much yours as it is mine. Je t'aime.

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INTRODUCTION

"BIENVENIDOS A ARIZONA": URBAN CHICANX/LATINX ART AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN PHOENIX

Just south of Thomas Road on 16th Street in Phoenix, on the side of "Deportes America" sporting goods store, a large, vibrant mural with the words "*Bienvenidos a Arizona*" (see Fig 1.1) marked a controversial moment in the state's recent history. At its center stood a black and white silhouette of the Virgen de Guadalupe, surrounded by colorful pre-Columbian pyramids and figures, notably *calaveras* with angel wings along with colorful flowers and cacti. Located at the corner of 16th Street and East Edgemont Avenue, the mural was impossible to miss and so was its message. Painted by artists Gennaro Garcia and DOSE, and commissioned by local Latinx[1] restaurateur and community advocate Silvana Salcido Esparza, the mural was completed in 2010 as part of the Calle 16 art collective following the implementation of Arizona's infamous Senate Bill 1070,[2] targeting undocumented immigrants. Today, the mural has been painted over and new designs grace the wall; much like urban life itself, the walls surrounding Calle 16 serve as a dynamic canvas that is in constant evolution. However, these murals do not stand alone; they are only some of many that adorn the streets of Phoenix referencing

[1] I employ the term "Latinx" to refer to populations of Latin American descent, a broad term that encompasses diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences as well as social and historical experiences.
[2] According to the parameters of the law, SB 1070: "Requires officials and agencies of the state and political subdivisions to fully comply with and assist in the enforcement of federal immigration laws and gives county attorneys subpoena power in certain investigations of employers. Establishes crimes involving trespassing by illegal aliens, stopping to hire or soliciting work under specified circumstances, and transporting, harboring or concealing unlawful aliens, and their respective penalties" (Arizona State Legislature "SB 1070").

pre-Columbian imagery, Mexican religious and cultural iconography, including Lucha Libre and Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), elements of the desert landscape, and Latinx faces sprinkled throughout the city scape. These murals, which, as displays of public art, are especially concentrated in the downtown, central, and southern sections of Phoenix, inject expressions of Chicanx[3] and Latinx imagery and sensibilities into the urban space, reflecting a unique, place-based cultural identity and the needs and concerns of some of its residents.

[3] The complexities inherent in the processes of identity formation, history, and representation in the Southwestern United States are reflected in the nomenclature used to describe its cultures and populations, such as the use and evolution of the terms "Chicano," "Chicana," "Chican@," and "Chicanx." Used as a pejorative term prior to the 1960s, the term "Chicano" was reclaimed by members of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement (1965–1975). The term "Chicana/o" is a term of self-identification used "to assert a gendered, racial, ethnic, class, and cultural identity in opposition to Anglo-American hegemony and state-sanctioned practices of representing people of Mexican descent in the United States" (Contreras 32). For the history and etymologies of the term "Chicano" see Tino Villanueva's renowned essay "Sobre el término 'Chicano'" (1978). In her entry "Chicana, Chicano, Chican@, and Chicanx" featured in *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (2017), Sheila Marie Contreras points to the use of 'x' in Chicanx which, in contrast to prior terms, breaks with perspectives based on traditional ideological and biological binaries which assign humans to one of two genders: "[it] is nonbinary; it acknowledges self-determinations that refuse immovable assignments of identity" (35). I align with the commitment of Chicana feminists who, from the 1970s, have sought to be more inclusive in representing gender diversity including feminist and queer identities. Thus, in the contemporary context, I utilize the gender-neutral terms "Chicanx" and "Latinx" which reject traditional gender binaries and can be used as both singular and plural. Throughout this dissertation, I employ the terms "Mexican–American" and "Chicanx" interchangeably to refer to populations of Mexican origin and descent, recognizing the points of difference in their sociopolitical connotation and how individuals self-identify. In my analysis of their artistic and cultural production, I employ the artists' preferred terms of self-identification.

Fig 1.1. *Bienvenidos a Arizona* ("Welcome to Arizona") (2010) was one of many murals included in the Calle 16 mural project, commissioned by local Latinx chef and restaurateur Silvana Salcido Esparza, owner of Barrio Café. Although it has since been painted over, Calle 16 continues to serve as a visual display of Chicanx/Latinx culture and pride in Phoenix. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Generations of literary visual artists and cultural producers in Phoenix have deployed their artistic expression as a medium for representing and responding to issues at the local, national, and international levels. In particular, the themes of immigration, border security, and, most recently, the separation and detention of migrant children and their families have been featured centrally at numerous local exhibitions and performances. Notable examples are James Garcia's theatre productions, including his most recent one titled *1070: We Were Strangers Once, Too,* which debuted in 2017 and dramatizes the impacts of the SB 1070 immigration bill on one family in Phoenix. A second example is Margarita Cabrera's "Space in Between" exhibit, which is the product of ongoing collaborative workshops initiated in 2016 in which immigrants from both sides of the Mexico–United States border come together to share their experiences and to create three–dimensional cacti sculptures using fabric sourced from U.S. Border Patrol

officers' uniforms. A third example is Lalo Cota's iconic calavera[4] figures, lowrider trucks, and infamous sombrero spaceships[5] —often set against a backdrop of the Phoenix skyline— that adorn the brick walls of the Roosevelt Row Arts District and beyond. Traversing multiple media, including –but not limited to–literature, photography, visual, sculptural, and performance art, their work testifies to the city's strong bicultural presence and influence. As a corpus, these pieces reflect different Chicanx and Latinx perspectives and experiences that are unequivocally particular to this area of the southwestern United States, while dialoguing with the local and global discourses that inform the artists' realities.

Since its first manifestations following the Mexican American or Chicano Civil Rights Movement (1965–1975),[6] a new genre of artistic and cultural production, classified as "Chicano art,"[7] emerged in many communities across the United States. This new genre has served to unite, educate, and inspire the Mexican–American population in the struggle for social justice and equal representation through the deployment of diverse media, including visual art, photography, public murals, and artistic and creative performances. Almost half a century later, contemporary Chicanx art –sometimes

[4] As a reflection of the seamless and natural incorporation of Spanish names and words in Phoenix public spaces and Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity, we have chosen not to italicize these Spanish words.
[5] Following the implementation of SB1070 the artist created one of his most famous and politically charged murals to date featuring three lowrider trucks set against a Phoenix skyline backdrop, and the "invasion" of a group of spaceships in the form of sombreros. Cota continues to use the sombrero iconography as a play on anti-immigrant rhetoric by depicting immigrants as "alien invaders"; a version of the mural can be seen at Barrio Café, 2814 N 16th Street, Phoenix, Arizona.
[6] For a review of the historical, political, and social context of the Chicano Movement see: Muñoz, Carolos. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement.* Verso, 2007 and Gonzales, Manuel. *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States.* Indiana University Press, 1999.
[7] When referring to the Mexican American/Chicano Civil Rights Movement (1965–1975) and early Chicano Art Movement we find it to be more historically accurate to employ the term "Chicano".

referred to as "post-Chicanx" art– has evolved and expanded to incorporate a more diverse population and globalized themes. Though debates surrounding its definition and aesthetics are ongoing,[8] recent studies have underscored the heterogeneous character of Chicanx art, as expressed by its creators and manifested in its content and aesthetics. Jennifer A. González defines this type of art as follows:

> It would be a significant mistake to see Chicana/o art as simply an "ethnic" or "identity-based" art movement from the barrio; rather, it is an experimental, socially oriented art practice, produced from specific regional and historical standpoints (including the barrio) but in direct conversation with other art movements of its era. (3)

This definition, proposed by González, rejects a simplistic over-generalization of Chicanx art, which is described as an "art practice" (7) as opposed to being a specific style, technique, or subject matter. Accordingly, the importance of individual expression is foregrounded in Chicanx art, viewed as a process of creative synthesis encompassing various ethnic, cultural, gendered and sexual identities and in the representation of cultural identity and resistance, especially in the face of threats of marginalization or discrimination.

For decades, discussions on the subject of Mexican–American or Chicanx art and experience have focused on the southwestern region of the United States, specifically California, Texas, and New Mexico. In the case of California, studies on the histories and

[8] This issue is discussed in Gonzalez et. al. *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology.* Duke University Press, 2019 and Baugh, Scott L., and Victor A. Sorrel. *Born of Resistance: Cara a Cara Encounters with Chicana/o Visual Culture.* University of Arizona Press, 2015.

activities of Mexican and Chicanx communities in the state have been extensive, including works by acclaimed researchers Rodolfo Acuña, Richard Griswold del Castillo, Simon Rodríguez, Alaniz and Cornish, Teresa Mckenna and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejerano, Shifra Goldman, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Eva Sperling Cockcroft, and Holly Barnet-Sánchez among others. In Texas, there has been a noteworthy attempt to produce and preserve Chicanx artistic and cultural production since the inception of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s. This initiative has included publications, both in Spanish and caló, of numerous literary works and journals and the formation of Chicanx art networks and groups[9] as well as community and cultural organizations.[10] Notable contributions by researchers documenting the histories of Mexican and Chicanx communities from the nineteenth century to the present, especially in San Antonio and El Paso, include *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (2010) by Monica Perales and *Border: The U.S.–Mexico Line* (1989), *Desert Army: Fort Bliss on the Texas Border* (1988), and *El Paso Chronicles: A Record of Historical Events in El Paso, Texas* (1993) by Leon Claire Metz. In New Mexico, there has also been significant interest in recovering and documenting the state's Chicanx past and present heritage, often supported by its cultural institutions and local government, including the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque (a division of the State of New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs) and the University of New Mexico's Center for the Arts

[9] Notable examples include Los Pintores de la Nueva Raza (established 1967, renamed Con Safo in 1972), Ladrones de la Luz (active 1979–), and the League of United Chicano Artists (active middle to late 1970s).
[10] Among them: El Centro Cultural de Aztlán (founded early 1970s), the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center (founded 1984), the Mexic-Arte Fine Arts Museum (founded 1984), and Galería Sin Fronteras (1986) in Austin. This effort continues into the present: currently the El Paso Museum of History pays homage to the city's Hispanic legacy with two permanent exhibits dedicated to Chicanx art and historical artifacts, including the work of local artists and muralists.

and Art Museum. Thomas J. Steele, Judith McLaughlin, Mary Caroline Montaño, Charles M. Tatum, Frederick Luis Aldama and Christopher González, and Luis Eligio Tapia and Carmella Padilla have focused on specific aspects of Chicanx arts and culture in New Mexico including folk art, religious iconography and *santeros*, as well as traditions and festivals.

Yet, despite the popularity of Chicanx art, and a renewed interest in the topic of borderland cultures in recent years, it seems that Phoenix's Chicanx and Latinx residents and their productions have largely been left out of the conversation. With a handful of exceptions including, notably Bradford Luckingham, Daniel Arreola and Alex Oberle, and David William Foster, most of the previous studies on Chicanx art and culture in the southwestern United States have focused on California, Texas, and New Mexico. In many cases, Arizona has been left out altogether, and at best, Phoenix has been relegated to a footnote. Thus, these studies have presented generalized, one-size-fits-all images of Chicanx culture in the Southwest that obscure its heterogeneity, complexity, and intricacies as well as the impacts of regional differences on its artistic production.

As the fifth most populous city in the United States[11] and the largest urban area in the Southwest, the Phoenix Metropolitan area boasts one of the largest Latinx populations in the country at over 40% of the city's total population.[12] Nevertheless, the city's

[11] The latest United States Census in July of 2018 showed a total population of 1,660,272 in Phoenix (United States Census Bureau).

[12] The exact number according to the 2018 Census was 42.6%. The United States Census defines "Hispanics or Latino" as: "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. This includes people who reported detailed Hispanic or Latino groups such as: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican Republic, Central American (excludes Mexican) Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan. Panamanian, Salvadoran, other Central America, South American (Argentinian, Bolivian, Chilean, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Paraguayan, Peruvian, Uruguayan, Venezuelan, other South American), Spaniard (All other Hispanic or Latino). Origin can be

Mexican and Chicanx past and present remain unacknowledged within the public domain and scholarly literature (major academic journals, archives, and critical anthologies). This invisibility is apparent in advertisements that market the area to tourists as a desert oasis founded by cowboys and inhabited by snowbirds. Thus, coverage of the area's rich Mexican and Chicanx heritage is almost non-existent, with the exception of pioneering contributions by David William Foster, Alex P. Oberle and Daniel D. Arreola, and Jesús J. Lara as well as local newspaper articles, publications by community organizations, and social media posts. Examples of outlets that publish articles on this topic are *Phoenix New Times*, Arizona State University's *Cronkite News*, and *La Phoenikera Blog*.

When I first arrived in the Phoenix Metropolitan area in 2012, I was struck by the discernible presence and influence of Mexican–American and Latinx cultures. Though this influence had permeated some areas more deeply than others, it was nevertheless palpable throughout the social and physical landscapes of the so-called "Valley of the Sun." Differing from other major urban centers and towns that I had previously visited, Phoenix reflected a unique Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity that encompassed a Borderland culture and consciousness, entailing a blend of English and Spanish; Mexican and American cultural symbols and references; and the added influence of life in the desert, including its unique flora and fauna. As a Canadian who was completely unfamiliar with the southwestern region of the United States, I was struck by the richness of different linguistic and cultural influences sedimented on to the city's cartography. These influences were augmented by the city's diverse business and services that

viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States" (United States Census Bureau).

revealed multiple invisible social and economic networks.[13] Examples of these enterprises included carnicerías, tortillerías, llanteras, and yerberías (often owned by Chicanx/Latinx proprietors who cater to their communities). This rich cultural diversity was undeniable and contrasted with the marketing images being conveyed to incoming tourists of a Western town founded by cowboys. So why then was hardly anyone talking about Phoenix's Chicanx and Mexican culture and artistic production?

After immersing myself in the topic, I was astounded to learn of the lack of public and scholarly attention to Phoenix's Chicanx and Latinx population and their contributions to the city. Accordingly, my dissertation addresses an urgent and increasingly alarming gap within academic research. Through an analysis of the works of several contemporary Chicanx and Latinx artists in Phoenix spanning different media (literature, urban art, and sculpture), I intend to honor the presence, productions, and contributions of a long-established community, and I hope that this work stimulates further investigation on this topic. Moreover, I aim to draw attention to a particularly under-represented sector within the international art market as well as in the local art scene within Phoenix: the works of female Latinx artists and cultural producers. As is the case in many major urban centers around the globe, Phoenix's mainstream art scene has been —and continues to be—largely dominated by (White) men. Under this umbrella, this pattern has been replicated in the (little) representation and coverage of

[13] The term "linguistic landscape" was introduced by Landry and Bourhis in 1997 in Canada to refer to: "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings [that] combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (25).

Chicanx/Latinx artists, with the majority focused on the works of male artists such as Gennaro Garcia, James Garcia, Lalo Cota, and El Mac.[14]

My dissertation seeks to explore how female Chicanx writers and artists spanning three generations—Stella Pope Duarte (born in 1948), Lucinda Y Hinojos (La Morena) (born in 1981), and Annie Lopez (born in 1958) —have used their art to process, mitigate, and embody their experiences as Chicanx subjects living in the Borderlands.[15] Through an examination of samples of their work in Phoenix, I will explore how these artists and cultural producers embody the aesthetic activism and ideals of the Chicano Art Movement set within a contemporary context. Their subjects, as I show, are those who are often silenced or ignored by mainstream society, including women of color, Dreamers,[16] and the undocumented. These works, which are conspicuous in the public domain, succeed in interjecting othered voices and bodies into the urban space. Furthermore, their material representations of a self-defined Chicanx/Latinx identity and the artists' emphasis on solidarity with and within this community (both locally and globally) respond to oppressive anti-immigrant sentiments that have prevailed in the

[14] Artist Annie Lopez has expanded on the issue by stating: "history has shown a systematic exclusion of women from mainstream art. Women artists only make up 3 to 5 percent of major permanent collections in the United States and Europe, with roughly just 5 percent of works on museum walls by women. And this percentage is even lower for women of color" (Bailey).

[15] Although this dissertation focuses on Phoenix, Arizona, we utilize the term "borderlands" as defined by Gloria Anzaldúa to mean: "the psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands, and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present whenever two or more culture edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch" (*Borderlands,* preface).

[16] The term "Dreamer" refers to young, undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children. The DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) was a legislative proposal designed to grant legal residency (including the right to work) to minors who qualified. It was introduced to the United States Senate in 2001, and although several versions have been introduced since, none have been approved to date.

social and political arenas at the state, national, and international levels. It is through such expression of self-representation that these artists and culture producers are contributing to uniting and empowering the Chicanx/Latinx community vis-á-vis a process of Latinx placemaking and community building, which allows for the definition of a Latinx space that is both physical and imaginary.

Among the productions that I examine is the literary work of Stella Pope Duarte. Hailed as "Phoenix's first Chicana writer" (Foster, *Glimpses* 109), Duarte is an award-winning author, educator, and community advocate who was born in Phoenix and still calls the city home. Her literary career was launched in 1995, and her collection of short stories and novels reveal an intimate connection with Phoenix, highlighting its downtown/central core and Chicanx barrios and enabling readers to recreate their own "mappings" of the city. Through their recounting of personal histories, Pope Duarte's narratives combine the local flavors of life in Phoenix–the names of the city's main streets and landmarks along with elements of the desert landscape, including oleander and orange blossoms– with portrayals of its residents, including its Chicanx population. As David William Foster notes, "Stella Pope Duarte's fiction projects a profound sense of Chicano life in Phoenix. In her case, however, there is virtually no competing writing, as so few Chicanos have written about life in the city" (*Glimpses* 162).

Similarly, Lucinda Y Hinojos (known by her artistic pseudonym, La Morena) also depicts Phoenix's Chicanx and Latinx population and the issues that affect them in her work. A self-identified Chicana artist, La Morena is a fourth-generation Mexican–American and Apache/Pima, and is proud to have been born and raised in Phoenix.

Though she is relatively new to the city's art scene, she has been active since 2015 and is quickly gaining popularity across the country and beyond because of her incredible talent as a muralist and her commitment to social justice issues. Her work, which focuses on subjects who are women of color, Dreamers, and the undocumented, draws attention to the voices and bodies of those who are often silenced or othered by mainstream society. Reflecting on the current political and social climate in Arizona and in the United States, she uses her art as a tool to empower the Chicanx/Latinx population and to promote a pan-ethnic feminist perspective.

An enduring presence within Phoenix's art scene, visual artist Annie Lopez has also dedicated her career to empowering the city's Chicanx/Latinx population, starting with her early work as one of the original members of the El Movimiento del Río Salado (M.A.R.S.)[17] art group (1975–2000). A fourth-generation native of Phoenix, Lopez uses cyanotype photography to bring together elements of her personal experience and family history with the history of Phoenix in her works. Though she has utilized different mediums in the past, including traditional black and white photography, Xerography, and cyanotype, her most recent exhibitions have conjoined personal and collective memories with the art of sewing, which she learned as a child. Her work addresses political and social issues and includes personal reflections on issues of race, gender, and cultural identity and stereotypes. In addition, by honoring her family's history as long-time residents of Arizona, her artwork attests to the contributions of the Latinx population to the state's physical and cultural landscape. As the artist herself affirms, "having us as part

[17] The abbreviations M.A.R.S./MARS are employed interchangeably in publications.

of the official record is important to me; I've tried to do this all along, I've tried to prove we've been here all this time; we are part of Arizona and our roots run very deep in Arizona" (Youtube, "Annie Lopez").

In my analysis of the works of these artists, I faced many of the same challenges encountered by critics who have studied Chicanx art and cultural production since the early stages of its development in the early 1970s. These challenges center on the question of how this work can be categorized and studied without oversimplifying it or undermining the heterogeneity of its content, aesthetics, methods, and creators. González elaborates on the complexity of this topic as follows:

> On the one hand, we want to articulate the characteristic and the distinctive qualities that define Chicana/o aesthetic and political paradigms, to demonstrate their uniqueness and difference from other Latino arts; on the other hand, we want to acknowledge that Chicana/o art emphasizes the condition of cultural mixing and celebrates a mestizo hybridity wherein all forms of ethnic and national purity are suspect. (González 7)

This attention to the richness and diversity of Chicanx art is also present in contemporary studies such as *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology* (González et al.) and *Born of Resistance: Cara a Cara Encounters with Chicana/o Visual Culture* (Baugh and Sorrel). In their first chapter, Baugh and Sorrel make the following statement:

> Chicana/o visual culture represents and expresses a vast array of cultural values and social and political stances, individual, familial, and communal histories, religious and spiritual inspirations, and more than any singular 'story' of Chicana/o cultural expression has heretofore offered. (11)

In my analysis, I apply and extend this insight to Phoenix in recognition of the city's increasingly diverse Chicanx and Latinx population; a group that, though still predominantly Mexican,[18] encompasses regional, ethnic, cultural, and generational differences and shifts that are reflected in its artistic production. However, throughout this study, my aim is to reveal common connections and to highlight shared underlying themes. In general, the works featured in this study exhibit the following characteristics of Chicanx art, as outlined by González, which are conveyed both in their aesthetics and in their communicative aims.

First, in terms of their aesthetics, these works reflect a distinct cultural identity and reclamation with reference to aspects of traditional Mexican culture and folk life as well as religious symbols and pre-Colombian iconography.[19] Second, they reflect the presence of a "transborder consciousness" (González 4). Similar to other Chicanx authors, artists, and performers, the artists and cultural producers who feature in this study do not simply combine existing Mexican and American cultural influences and symbols; rather, they produce something entirely new. Often described as *Ni de aquí ni*

[18] Oberle maintains: "The Mexican ancestry population still accounts for about 84 percent of the city's Hispanics, although this majority has diminished since 1990 when 91.5 percent of Latinos claimed Mexican heritage. During this decade, the percentage of most other Hispanic subgroups has increased, especially in the Cuban and Guatemalan populations" (152).

[19] In addition, González notes a return "to vernacular traditions of fabrication, to graffiti art, or to working-class strategies of making do with what is at hand were valorized and celebrated as a *rasquachimo*, or underdog aesthetic" (4).

allá ("Neither here nor there"), this complex and hybrid identity, in terms of its cultural, ethnic, and linguistic components, is indicative of a new third Borderland culture.[20]

The articulation of a new genre of cultural and artistic production that resists the dominant Anglo mainstream culture is an integral part of this transborder consciousness and identity.[21] In 1969, young Chicanx artists, activists, writers, students, and community leaders came together at the Denver Youth Conference —the country's first national Chicano youth conference— and expressed the need for a new, self-defined Chicano identity. Writing on this topic, Carlos Muñoz, a pioneering figure in the Chicano Movement, affirmed: "This new identity would base itself on symbols of traditional Mexican culture and would reflect a total rejection of *gabacho* culture— the culture of the white Anglo–Saxon Protestant" (Muñoz 92).[22] Furthermore, the bearers of this new identity were what Rosa Linda Fregoso has called "the new subjects of the counterdiscourse of Chicano liberation" (30). Mostly of working-class and non-European origins, they were featured in poetry, mural paintings, and film and theater productions.

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[20] Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa has described this third Borderland culture as: "The U.S.–Mexican border es una herida abierta [is an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country— a border culture." Translation is mine (Borderlands, 25). Adding to this, González notes: "The cultural blending but also duality of Mexican and U.S. symbols, the coupling of two elements to create a third meaning, were celebrated in concepts such as *mestizaje* or *difrasismo*" (4).

[21] For the purpose of this study, I use the term "Anglo" to refer to Caucasians of non-Hispanic descent. As with any terminology attempting to classify group ethnicity or identity, we acknowledge its problematic nature. The term "Anglo" makes no distinction between ethno-racial or religious groups. It must be noted that this group is not monolithic and comprises distinct ethno-racial and religious identities.

[22]Also fundamental to this self-defined, Chicanx identity was the concept of "carnalismo," defined as "the brotherhood code of the Mexican American youth gangs" (Muñoz 76). Following the early stages of the Movement, in the 1970s Chicana feminists sought to combat machista attitudes and defend women's rights. For more information on Chicana feminist theory see: Sánchez, Rosaura. "The History of Chicanas: A Proposal for a Materialist Perspective." In *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History.* Ed. Adelaida R. Castillo, Encanto: Floricanto Press, 1990. pp. 1–29. Also see: Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History.* Indiana University Press, 1999.

Within the Chicano Movement, "cultural workers systematically figured the pachuco (urban street youth), the pinto (ex-convict), and the indigenous (mostly Aztec) warrior" (Fregoso 30). Through these new forms and symbols, Chicanx artists and culture producers not only created a new visual language but they also transformed the ways in which art is produced, who it is produced for, and where it was displayed, introducing: "new ways of thinking about the world, and about art" (González 4).[23]

Typical of Chicanx artistic and cultural production, the works examined in this dissertation reflect an emphasis on political activism and social consciousness. Since the inception of the Chicano Movement, artists have played an important role as "producers of visual education" (Ybarra-Frausto 56),[24] using their work, especially visual forms, to represent, unite, and educate their communities. Often featured in posters and murals, these messages would be easily available and visible to public audiences that lacked access or an interest in traditional high art exhibition spaces. Today, much of contemporary Chicanx art continues to reflect ties to social and political issues, including immigration, citizenship, and cultural identity.

Informed by borderland theory and by a transnational feminist perspective proposed by Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Ana Castillo, and other Chicana feminists, my dissertation explores how these artists and cultural producers have aligned

[23] González explains: "For Chicana/o art to be properly understood, a new linguistic and conceptual discourse was necessary. For outsiders, without Spanish or Nahuatl language proficiency, this eclectic, multilingual mix of references would at first appear purposefully alien and potentially arcane. In some ways, this was the intended effect, insofar as it constituted a self-conscious effort, to create a counter-discourse or intellectual resistance to the English-dominant mainstream or, particularly with reference to Indigenous terms, a European history of colonization" (4).

[24] For reference see "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" manifesto drafted at the Chicano Youth Conference in 1969.

themselves with trends within contemporary Chicanx artistic and cultural production. Specifically, I show how they shy away from cultural nationalism and nostalgia,[25] focusing on the impacts of local issues that affect Chicanx/Latinx communities both locally and abroad, thereby demonstrating that there *is* something worth talking about in Phoenix.

Methodology

Throughout my dissertation, I will employ a theoretical framework that is grounded in principles outlined by Robert Shusterman, Raúl Homero Villa, and Edward Soja. By establishing a close connection between mind-body-space, and by maintaining a focus on Latinx community building and placemaking processes, the works of these authors and artists in Phoenix open up a thirdspace that is dedicated to educating, inspiring, uniting, and empowering Chicanx and Latinx communities. In addition, their works signify a re-appropriation of Chicanx/Latinx space within the urban sphere that enables self-representation, cultural affirmation, and collective healing.

First, it is essential to contextualize the theories put forth by Shusterman, Villa, and Soja within a framework that has been defined by Chicanx feminists, who include Gloria Anzaldúa, Norma Alarcón, Emma Pérez, and Rosaura Sánchez. As postcolonial critics alongside Bell Hooks, Gayatri Spivak, and others, these Chicanx feminists have

[25] Baugh and Sorell note that "within the field of Chicana/o literary studies, scholarship over the last two decades or so has initiated the move away from Chicano nationalism to integrational pluralism: book-length studies by Rafael Pérez-Torres (1995), Ramón Saldívar (1990), José David Saldívar (1997), Héctor Calderón (2004), and Emily Hicks (1991) argue that Chicana/o literature transcends the singular and exclusionary social politics of nationalism to address diverse national and international issues of concern to all citizens throughout the Americas and the world" (12).

used borderland spaces as a trope from which to dialogue with and combat traditional power structures and dichotomies, including those of "colorizer-colonized, elite-subaltern, global-local, center-periphery, First World-Third World" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 135). In his work on "thirdspace," Soja named Anzaldúa as "the leading spatial theoretician of the borderlands and *mestizaje*" (*Thirdspace* 129). Pointing to a "reworlding" of the border, he cited the works of several Chicanx feminist authors, including Norma Alarcón, Terri de la Peña, María Lugones, and Sandra Cisneros, among others, for their innovative contributions to spatial theory in the borderlands (129). As a pioneering scholar of both Borderland and queer theory, Anzaldúa introduced *la nueva mestiza*, a new identity that transcends all traditional ideological, physical, biological, and social dichotomies.[26] As both an inhabitant of the Borderlands and a borderland space itself, the *new mestiza* body is the locus where an interstitial reality is internalized, processed, and mitigated. Thus, Anzaldúa introduces the body as a way to produce, interpret, and generate understanding and, ultimately, freedom; "body writing" facilitates her own process of de-colonization and empowerment by enabling her to articulate a new, self-defined identity.

> When I write it feels like I'm carving bone. It feels like I'm creating my own face, my own heart- a Nahuatl concept. My soul makes itself through

[26] Anzaldúa affirms: "the work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her prisoner and to show in the flesh through the images in her work how duality is transcended [. . .] "a massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence of war" (*Borderlands,* 78–80).

> the creative act. It is constantly remaking and giving birth to itself through my body. (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 95)

This corporeal connection is closely aligned with the practice of somaesthetics, as defined by Richard Shusterman, which emphasizes the importance of the body as a "locus of perception" (Shusterman, *Aesthetic* 2) and an "experiencing subject" (*Pragmatist* 57) that internalizes, processes, and reacts to environmental and emotional stimuli (*Aesthetic* 2). In 1996, Shusterman coined the term "somaesthetics,"[27] which refers to "the critical study and meliorative cultivation of the body as the site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning" (*Aesthetic* 1). At the center of this practice, the *soma* functions as a holistic entity, breaking with the traditional mind-body dichotomy that prevails within Western philosophy.

Shusterman identified three frequently overlapping lines of inquiry that are rooted in pragmatist aesthetics, the study of the aesthetic experience, and ancient Eastern and Western philosophies related to the art of living (*Aesthetic* 1–2). The first is analytic somaesthetics or the role of the body in our understanding, perception of, and connection to the world around us. The second is pragmatic somaesthetics, relating to the various disciplines dedicated to improving the functioning of the soma, including T'ai chi ch'uan, martial arts, and yoga (*Pragmatist* 223–6). The final line of inquiry is practical somaesthetics, which stresses the physical element of somaesthetics in addition to its theoretical component (*Pragmatist* 226). In his discussion of somaesthetics and popular

[27] The term draws from the Greek words for "body" (*soma*) and "sense-perception" (*aesthesis*) (Fernández Gómez 15).

art, Shushterman engaged with the theory advanced by John Dewey and highlighted the roles of both the artist and the spectator within an "embodied experience" (*Pragmatist* 212). His conclusions are aligned with those of cutting-edge cognitive neuroscience researchers and scholars such as Jill Bennett who investigated the corporeal impacts of the aesthetic experience for those who create as well as and receive them. In the context of the borderlands, the soma plays a particularly important role associated with geopolitics, serving as a medium for examining issues of color, class, gender, and social justice. This topic is especially pertinent to my analysis; a clear emphasis on the body — or soma— is evident in Chicanx/Latinx or border art, both in its early and contemporary forms, though this characteristic is not unique to this art form. Commencing from its early manifestations during the Chicano Movement, many Chicanx artists have deployed the body as a trope to explore and represent the relationship between identity (ethnic, sexual, and cultural), space, and place in what has been described as a "Chicanx aesthetic" (Sperling Cockcroft 195). Often drawing on indigenous concepts, many Chicanx authors and artists have called for the cultivation of the mind-body-spirit connection in creative expressions which serve to initiate processes of decolonization, liberation, and healing. Despite the many similarities between an embodied Chicanx experience and Shusterman's somaesthetics, this relationship has been relatively unexplored within scholarly research.

The barrio has been an important motif in Chicanx art throughout its history. Raúl Homero Villa's *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* is a foundational text in the field of Chicanx spatial studies. Introducing the key concepts

of *barriology/barrioization*, Villa conducted an in-depth examination of the spatial practices and the artistic and cultural production of urban Chicanx communities while illuminating the historical and sociological contexts that have shaped them. The book considers the formation, development, and displacement of Chicanx communities in Southern California (specifically, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Sacramento), commencing from the nineteenth century onwards, as the outcome of social and economic segregation policies as well as urban development processes, notably urbanization and gentrification. Villa outlined three effects of the dominant (Anglo) system that have regulated urban space and contributed to the formation of Chicanx barrios through a process of what he terms "barrioization." The first is the landscape effect (Villa 4), which includes spatial practices and policies that have impacted the physical organization of cities in Southern California. The second is the law effect (Villa 4), that is, repressive practices carried out by local law enforcement institutions against the Chicanx population. The third is the media effect (Villa 4), which includes representations of the Chicanx population within the mainstream media and their role in shaping public perceptions. According to Villa, these processes led to the physical and social subordination of the Chicanx population to an Anglo–Saxon cultural hegemony (4).

Villa described the barrio as a "complex and contradictory social space for its residents" (8); one where residents develop and express a space/place-specific identity to contest their position of subordination through a process of barriology. In doing so, Villa reclaimed a term that was first employed in the 1960s by the Con Safos art collective in

East Los Angeles to denote "a playful but serious promotion of the cultural knowledge and practices particular to the barrio" (Ybarra-Frausto qtd. in Villa 7). For Villa, the barrio constitutes both a physical and a social space where residents "reveal multiple possibilities for re-creating and re-imaging dominant urban *space* as community-enabling *place*" (6) through the expression of cultural and artistic practices and production:

> Barrio residents have consciously and unconsciously enacted resistive tactics or defensive mechanisms to secure and preserve the integrity of their cultural place-identity within and against the often hostile space regulation of dominant urbanism. (Villa 5)

Villa's study of the barrio, which is often considered a marginal space within the urban sphere, highlights examples of positive cultural affirmation, often reflecting a sense of pride and belonging that signifies a re-appropriation of the urban space by members of these communities. For the purpose of this study, I apply Villa's theories to examine issues of identity, community formation, and cultural production in Phoenix. The history and development of this city's urban sprawl have prompted the formation of cultural enclaves as "pockets" that include Chicanx/Latinx communities spread out throughout metropolitan Phoenix, Southern Phoenix, Buckeye, and Mesa. Though many of the original Chicanx barrios or neighborhoods have been destroyed as a result of urbanization and industrial expansion, I will attend especially to Southern Phoenix, considered as a cultural Chicanx/Latinx space. Historically established as a working-class neighborhood composed of ethnic minorities, Southern Phoenix continues to be a prominent site of

Latinx cultural-artistic production, social and economic networks, placemaking, and resistance against the threat of gentrification and deterritorialization.

Over the last few decades, scholars such as Tuan, Soja, de Certeau, and Cecil have theorized the body-space-place relationship. In particular, I draw on the notion of "thirdspace" proposed by the postmodern geographer and urban theorist, Edward Soja, in this study. Soja's book, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social* Theory, which is informed by the works of Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, Marshall Berman, John Berger, and others, explores the relationship between geography, social relations, and power structures (6). Taking the city of Los Angeles as his case study, Soja expanded on this notion of space in *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. In this work, in dialogue with Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, Soja presented his own spatial trialectic comprising three spaces: first space, or the material or physical space in a city (*Thirdspace* 6), 2); second space: "conceived in ideas about space, in thoughtful re-representations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms" (*Thirdspace* 10), and 3) thirdspace, a merging of "the real and the imagined" (*Thirdspace* 56–57). In it:

> Everything comes together [. . .] subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, [. . .] the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (*Thirdspace* 56–57)

The element of thirdspace, conceived as the locus of counter-narratives and counter-culture, is the focus of this study. As Soja notes:

> They are not just 'other spaces' to be added on to the geographical imagination, they are also 'other than' the established ways of thinking spatially. They are meant to detonate, to deconstruct, not to be comfortable poured back into old containers. (*Thirdspace* 163)

The space that has been created by Phoenix's Chicanx and Latinx artistic community can be situated within the scope of this definition of a thirdspace. Notably, since 2010, artists, authors, and cultural producers in the city have deployed this space to define themselves in contrast to a hegemonic Anglo–Saxon culture and to combat anti-immigrant political and legal measures introduced at both the state and national levels. Located at the nexus of the physical and the imagined, the historical and the contemporary, Chicanx/Latinx artistic and cultural production in Phoenix allows for the expression of a unique place-based hybrid identity and the creation of new communities. As Soja notes in *Thirdspace*: "it can be mapped but never captured in conventional cartographies; it can be creatively imagined but obtains meaning only when practiced and fully lived" (279).

Chapter Outline

This dissertation comprises five chapters. In the first chapter, "Phoenix: City of Cultural Ambivalences and Ambiguities," I present a brief history of the Hispanic Southwest, including migration and settlement in the Arizona region. In addition, I

provide a broad overview of the history of Phoenix, Arizona, which was established in 1881. In this overview, I identify and elaborate on the factors that have contributed to the settlement, development, and composition of Phoenix's Chicanx/Latinx communities. Specifically, I outline the social, economic, and political factors that have resulted in the socio-spatial distribution of the city's historic and contemporary Mexican, Mexican–American/Chicanx, and Latinx communities. This analysis is contextualized in relation to the presence of Chicanx and Latinx cultural influences and artistic production, which are more concentrated in certain areas.

The second chapter, "Entre cemento y desierto: Urban Landscapes in the Narratives of Stella Pope Duarte," focuses on Chicanx literary production in Phoenix based on a review of the work of Stella Pope Duarte. The review centers on three of Pope Duarte's major works: *Fragile Night*, *Let Their Spirits Dance*, and *Women Who Live in Coffee Shops and Other Stories.* Each of these works foregrounds representations of Phoenix's barrio residents and their spaces, both intimate and public, and elucidates the cultural identities and community-building processes that take form in these communities, often subverting traditional models in lieu of more inclusive, intra-ethnic alternatives. Through the use of various autobiographic and historic elements, accentuated by somaesthetic glimpses of life in the "Valley of the Sun," Pope Duarte's narratives serve as a form of literary ethnography of Phoenix spanning the second half of the twentieth century.

In the third chapter, "Chicanx Muralism and Urban Art in Phoenix: 'Lucha sin fin,' the Muralism and Artivism of Lucinda Y Hinojos (La Morena)," I present an

analysis of the street art of Lucinda Y Hinojos (La Morena). The analysis focuses on this artist's murals displayed in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, including her early work as well as two installations from her "Colors of la comunidad" mural project established in 2018: "Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom" (2018), dedicated to undocumented youth in the heart of Southern Phoenix, and "Humanity Over Hate" (2019), an installation that speaks against the detention and separation of asylum seekers. Also included in the analysis are two other murals located in Phoenix: "Mother Earth" (2017), also located in South Phoenix, and "No More Stolen Sisters" (2019), dedicated to the thousands of missing and murdered indigenous women and children in Arizona and beyond. The discussion in the last section of the chapter centers on three of her murals located in other parts of the United States: "Lucha sin fin" (2016) located in Coachella Valley, California, "Limpia por la comunidad" (2017) in Rochester, New York, and "Was That Day the Conquest? Independence?" (2018) in Yuma, Arizona. As an extension of her work in Phoenix, these murals display aspects of contemporary Chicanx aesthetic activism while highlighting the flexibility of thirdspace to extend geographic boundaries.

In the fourth chapter, "Chicanx Mixed Media Art in Phoenix. Blue Tones, Photographs, and Tamale Wrappers: The Work of Annie Lopez," I examine the career trajectory of Annie Lopez along with specific works by this artist. In particular, I discuss her use of cyanotype photography to document Phoenix's history and pay homage to her family's history as fourth-generation Latinx residents of Arizona. This chapter focuses on specific artworks from her past exhibitions, including her early work as part of El

Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado (M.A.R.S.), "The Hispanic Series" (1980s–present day), "The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" (2007), and some of her most recent pieces in which she sewed together remnants of personal and collective memory into a collection of over thirty dresses, each portraying a different theme. Key topics that she explores in her work are cultural identity as well as intra- and intercommunity stereotypes, racism, and sexism based on her own lived experiences as a female Mexican–American artist in Phoenix.

In the conclusion, I will end with the work of a rising new generation of Latinx artists in Phoenix: Sam Fresquez, Melissa Dunmore, Diana Calderon, Chela Chelinski, and Las Chollas Peligrosas. I illuminate the different ways in which these talented young artists express their own personal perspectives and experiences of living as Chicanx and Latinx identities in Phoenix in their works. Their artistic productions reveal a strong connection to the field of somaesthetics and align themselves with the objective of post-Chicanx art in that they move away from traditional, fixed notions of ethnic, cultural, or sexual identity. Though this chapter is the final chapter of my dissertation, it is by no means intended to offer a conclusion regarding the topic under investigation. Rather, my intention is for this dissertation to serve as a testament to the plethora of promising Chicanx and Latinx artists and cultural producers in Phoenix that will, I hope, stimulate further research.

CHAPTER 1

PHOENIX: CITY OF CULTURAL AMBIVALENCES AND AMBIGUITIES

The history of Arizona testifies to the perseverance of the people who successfully established communities in the region despite constant environmental hardship, a paucity of resources, and competition over these resources with other groups. Over the course of Arizona's history, its land and people have been influenced by the cultures of the different groups that have inhabited the region: early civilizations as well as indigenous,[28] European, Mexican, and Anglo–American. As with any human collective, the civilizations that have called this territory home did not advance independently but were part of complex and dynamic exchange systems encompassing ideologies, goods, and technologies, many which endure in the present. The interrelations and contributions of each of these populations can be studied in relation to different periods in Arizona's history: the prehistoric and early periods; the Spanish and Mexican periods; and contemporary history commencing from the twentieth century. For the purpose of this study, the Spanish, Mexican, and American historical periods are particularly significant. Within this broad historical context, researchers, notably Gonzales, Officer, Sheridan, and Vélez-Ibáñez have highlighted the events and interaction between indigenous, European, Mexican, and Anglo–American groups and

[28] Among the first inhabitants of the land, Vélez-Ibáñez outlined "early period exchange systems" between the Hopis, O'odham, River Yumans, and the Paiutes dating back as early as 300 B.C. (23).

their role in shaping the physical, economic, and cultural landscapes[29] of what is now the American Southwest. In the following sections, I will provide a brief overview of the historical events that led to the formation of present-day Arizona —now the forty-eighth state of the United States— and of its capital, Phoenix. My intention is to illuminate how these events have contributed to the physical and social reality of the region, now known as the American Southwest, both in its early and contemporary society.

A Brief Review of the Hispanic Presence in the Southwestern United States

The American Southwest is unique among the regions of the United States because the history of its Hispanic communities predates the founding of several of its states, notably Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, as well as much of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. Within this region, however, the histories of the development of Hispanic settlements within each state are distinct and complex, differentiated according to the manifold ethnic, cultural, and linguistic attributes and patterns of each population. The inception of Hispanic history in the Southwest can be traced back to the first European forays into the territory in the sixteenth century in pursuit of the promise of gold. In 1527, en route to the Viceroyalty of New Spain, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1490–1557) and his crew, who were part of the Narváez Expedition, were caught in a storm that destroyed their ship. Cabeza de Vaca, along with the only other survivors, namely Andrés Dorantes and Alonso del Castillo (both Spaniards) and Estevánico (a

[29] Here I employ the term "cultural landscapes" as defined by Daniel Arreola to mean: "a spatial concept used by geographers and others to help frame how groups create distinctive spaces in cities through symbolic representation of material culture both private and public" (*Placemaking* 158).

Moor), embarked on what would end up being an eight–year journey into the territory now known as the American Southwest (Gonzales 29). In subsequent decades, other expeditions to this region followed: in 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado (1510–1554), accompanied by approximately eleven hundred men and their families, along with seven hundred Native Americans, set sail in search of the famed Golden Cities (Gonzales 31). They traveled a distance of around three thousand miles along the western coast and entered the lands of the Pueblo Indians, Zuñi, and other indigenous tribes before finally docking in present–day Mexico (Gonzales 31). Soon after, in 1542 Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo set out on another expedition, sailing up the western coast of New Spain and reaching what is now California. Over the course of the next two centuries, more European settlers were drawn to the territory, including explorers, miners, and early Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries, who brought their religious beliefs and ways of life to the New World.[30]

In *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (1999), Manuel G. Gonzales provided an exhaustive historical review of the events that shaped the early formation of the southwestern region of the United States. In this book, he revealed the complex social dynamics of an early European colonial frontier society that are often left of conventional historical accounts, emphasizing the heterogeneity of both European and indigenous groups as well as the nature of contact and relations between them.[31] A

[30] Perhaps the most notable example of Spanish Catholic missions in Arizona is San Xavier del Bac, located on the Tohono O'odham Nation Reservation in Tucson.

[31] Regarding relations between European colonizers and indigenous groups, Gonzales noted that: "In recent years, much has been written about the treatment of the Native American by the Spanish, but the subject remains controversial. Practically the only point on which there is general consensus is that it is difficult to generalize about the relationship between the two peoples on the northern frontier. There was a

second work, *Border Visions: Mexican Cultures of the Southwest United States* (1996) by Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez similarly introduces a novel perspective to the field of borderland research. Like Gonzales, Vélez-Ibáñez also paid tribute to the region's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity prior to, during, and after the arrival of European colonizers. His analysis attends to the complex and interdependent social and technological systems that are integral to communities in the area. This perspective challenges the popular notion held by many researchers and scholars who have suggested that the region now known as the Southwestern United States was a "sparsely settled" and "empty physical and cultural space" (20–21) at the time of the European colonizers' arrival in the sixteenth century. Citing evidence that relates to the indigenous civilizations of the Pueblo, Opata, and Pima Alto peoples, Vélez-Ibáñez made the following claim:

> [T]here is sufficient evidence to conclude that for at least 1,696 years the pre-Hispanic Greater Southwest was part of a series of exchange systems made up of centers of production, trade, and redistribution that functioned according to the availability of food and its acquisition. (35)

Vélez-Ibáñez's account of early conquests and colonization presents a more nuanced reading, unveiling multi-directional forms of contact and exchange of diverse cultural and ethnic influences and social and technological systems he described as "cultural bumping" (6). Thus, he broke with traditional perceptions of the territories of Mexico and the contemporary United States–Mexico Borderlands as being completely

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sizable discrepancy between attitudes and treatment, particularly on the part of the Spanish. [. . .] Thus, generalizations about Indians, even when limited to the heart of the Southwest, are difficult at best" (39).

separate entities, instead highlighting an ongoing "dynamic process" of interaction between them (Vélez-Ibáñez 6).

Vélez-Ibáñez's work has elucidated how the migration of people and of ideological, technological, and social systems influenced mestizo Hispano/Mexicano cultures in different parts of the Hispanic Southwest. This region was known as Las Provincias Internas (Vélez-Ibáñez 37) during the period extending from the Spanish colonial period up to 1821.[32] It is not my intention to delve in detail into the different migratory and trade movements that have occurred in the region over the centuries. However, I wish to draw attention to the historical development of the Pimería Alta region, as well as the sophisticated and dynamic exchange systems that existed in the region prior to and following the arrival of European colonizers. These systems have had a formative influence not only on the early Hispanic Southwest, but a continued importance on the social, environmental, and cultural heritage of the area that is visible in its contemporary artistic and cultural production.

Pimería Alta (Contemporary Arizona)

In his study, *Border Visions: Mexican Cultures of the Southwest United States*, Vélez-Ibáñez called for a special focus on the Pimería Alta region, stating that "there is no other region of the Northern Greater Southwest that has been so stubbornly and persistently Sonoran in its regional identity than what it is now known as Arizona or Pimería Alta" (40). Vélez-Ibáñez noted the impacts of the ethnic and cultural

[32] Las Provincias Internas included Nuevo Mexico, Pimería Alta (present-day Arizona), Texas, and Alta California.

composition of Pimería Alta's frontier communities on contemporary Arizona's cultural identity, which is distinct from that of other parts of the Provincias Internas. Caste-based differentiation was not as strict here as in other regions, and intermarriages were prevalent, contributing further to the bi-cultural and in many cases multicultural heritage of the region.[33]

Researchers, including Gonzales, Vélez-Ibáñez, and Officer have highlighted additional features that are integral to the frontier life and culture of Sonora/Arizona.[34] These features include, but are not limited to, enduring connections and exchanges with Mexico, a sense of independence resulting from the considerable distances between frontier communities and central authorities, and the critical importance of social network systems for supporting and ensuring the survival of these communities, which faced numerous challenges. For Vélez-Ibáñez, Pimería Alta's enduring connection with Mexico, "its continuous relations with the South, its very late disengagement from the Republic of Mexico, and the ease with which populations moved North to South and back again" (41) have defined the region and its culture.

At the same time, as noted by Vélez-Ibáñez, the geographic and economic isolation of these frontier settlements from the southern centers of Spanish colonial authority required a survival strategy entailing a higher level of self-sustainability as well as the formation of new social networks with indigenous communities that were local

[33] Both Vélez-Ibáñez and Officer have cited the life of Juan Bojórquez as exemplary of the region's history and multicultural identity; a corporal stationed at the Tucson Presidio, Bojórquez, was sent back to Mexico in March 1856 following the Gadsden Purchase. Shortly after, he returned to Tucson where he built a business and a home, remaining there until he died in 1920 (Officer xv).

[34] Here I employ the encompassing term "Sonora/Arizona" used by Vélez-Ibáñez to underscore the cultural continuity of this region (37).

allies (52). Residents of these early frontier communities faces many challenges, including environmental and climatically induced hardships, diseases, and constant attacks from neighboring indigenous tribes, such as the Apache. Addressing these constant challenges required a high level of adaptability and the active and collective participation of all members of a community.[35] Vélez-Ibáñez affirmed the importance of collaboration between the different groups, notably allied indigenous communities that enabled them to survive and thrive in the Pimería region. Even after Mexican Independence was achieved in 1821, this tradition of collaboration was maintained by constant migrations to and from the south. New settlements relied on shared resources and technologies from allied indigenous communities, including acequia water systems, while they also provided support against Apache attacks. As Vélez-Ibáñez stated:

> That they succeeded at all is a testament to their ability to cooperate, develop exchange relations, and create a functional, though precarious, social, and political fabric among themselves and others in Sonoran Pimería Alta. (47)

Extensive research conducted by scholars such as Gonzales, Officer, and Vélez-Ibáñez has revealed the multicultural community ties and exchange systems of early Hispanic settlements in the Southwest that were an essential part of the region long before the arrival of the European colonizers. As Vélez-Ibáñez has observed, these

[35] In his study, Vélez-Ibáñez pointed to how life on the Sonora/Arizona frontier impacted society, including gender roles; "Both men and women had to defend themselves, and women were more than likely to be just as adept at handling weapons as men, especially when the latter were on counter raids against Apaches. While the domestic unit of the household was most certainly divided by gender, there is no doubt that frequent spousal changes occurred as a result of early widowhood and because of male absences" (45).

influences and exchange systems are not only a testament to the adaptability and endurance of these communities but they also reveal their intimate relationships with the land that have shaped the region's cultural identity in a unique way.

> [T]he environment, social, and economical [*sic*] dynamics of the Greater Southwest demanded that its populations be amazingly adaptable, which at times meant learning from or becoming amalgamated with other groups. Simultaneously, they created rituals— ceremonial, artistic, and physical expressions—that reflected ancient ideas from the south but included as well as their own versions that tended to better fit the existing conditions in which they found themselves. (Vélez-Ibáñez 35)

The findings of Gonzales, Vélez-Ibáñez, and Officer regarding the cultural and geographical characteristics of Pimería Alta's early frontier communities offer critical perspectives into a unique identity and culture that continues in the region to the present day.

High Noon at the O.K. Corral: Arizona, A New American Territory

The arrival of Anglo–American trappers in the region in the early nineteenth century marked the beginning of what Sheridan has called "a new era in Arizona history" (51), as it foreshadowed what was to come.[36] In light of expansionist sentiments that were backed by a "Manifest destiny" ideology, the United States set its sights on what was

[36] Sherdian cited Sylvester Pattie and his son James, both trappers, as the first Anglos to "set foot on Arizona soil" (52). For more information on early Anglo trappers in Arizona see: Sheridan, Thomas E. "Mexican Arizona and the Anglo Frontier." In *Arizona – A History, Revised Edition*. University of Arizona Press, 2012. pp. 51-66.

then the Mexican northwestern frontier, declaring war on Mexico in May of 1846. The Mexican–American War (1846–1848) ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as a result of which Mexico lost a substantial portion of its territory that was incorporated into the United States to form the present-day states of Utah, New Mexico, California, Nevada, and most of Arizona.[37] It was not long before American expansionist ideals prevailed once more, now focusing on areas south of the Mexican territory below the Gila River. In 1821, Mexico attained independence from Spain following a decade-long battle with lasting impacts. Already plagued with harsh climatic conditions and drought, ongoing Apache raids, and disease, Mexico's fronterizo population now had to contend with a declining mining industry and a depleted national treasury (Sheridan 51). Given these economic struggles, in December of 1853, following a meeting between James Gadsden, an American soldier and diplomat, and the Mexican president, Santa Anna, the "Gadsden Purchase" was formalized, whereby Mexico agreed to sell thirty square miles of its territory to the United States. Accordingly, the United States acquired New Mexico and the rest of Arizona, and the Mexico–United States border, as it currently exists, was set in place (Gonzales 93). Despite changes in the physical designation of the border, as Gonzales and Vélez-Ibáñez have noted, close cultural, economic, and social ties endured between what was now American territory and Mexico

[37] Frank D. Bean and Marta Tienda noted the impact of the annexation on the Southwest's social landscape by saying, "Unlike other immigrant groups who voluntarily migrated to the United States and whose sense of peoplehood and ethnicity was shaped by the immigration process and subsequent reception in the new society, Mexicans residing on U.S. territory at that time had neither cause nor power to challenge the new Anglo rulers. Not only did a rapid and clear break with the parent country occur, together with ensuing socioeconomic and cultural subjugation, but the land itself that the indigenous population considered its own was often lost" (17).

(Gonzales 93). These interactions and a certain amount of cooperation between Mexican, Mexican–American, and Anglo groups following the Mexican–American War (1846–1848) played a key role in advancing the social and economic sectors of Borderland communities, including the development of their main industries: agriculture, copper and silver mining, railroads, and ranching (Gonzales 94). Apart from Gonzales, Meeks has also elucidated inter-ethnic bonds that were crucial to the routine functioning of frontier society, such as the prevalence of intermarriage[38] and the system of "compradrazgo"[39] (Meeks 84).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad heralded a new era of rapid industrialization in Arizona. With increased migration into Arizona from other parts of the country as well as from Mexico and Europe, a demographic shift toward a majority Anglo population was increasingly evident, prompting rising social tensions between different ethnic groups. However, Mexicans and Mexican–Americans, who comprised the majority of the labor force in the agricultural, mining, railroad, and ranching industries, were frequently subjected to exploitation as inter–group discrimination and violence escalated within their

[38] On the topic of inter-ethnic marriages, Meeks noted: "not only were marriages between ethnic Mexicans and Anglo–Americans legal, but in the nineteenth century they were common –suggesting that Anglo–Americans did not yet view ethnic Mexicans as clearly non-white. Intermarriage was particularly common in communities with large, ethnic Mexican populations such as Tucson and in rural areas near the border. Up to 1879, of all marriages in Tucson, 23 percent were between Anglo–Americans and ethnic Mexicans" (82).

[39] Meeks explored the topic of compradrazgo in his chapter "Crossing Borders," and noted "under this system, individuals sponsored their neighbors as *padrinos/madrinas*, or godparents, for events such as weddings, baptisms, and the fulfillment of ritual vows. Compadrazgo, often crossed ethic lines, since the region's ethnic Mexicans, Yaquis, and O'odham shared the tradition" (84).

communities (Sheridan 74).[40] At the same time, they faced ongoing threats from neighboring indigenous tribes, both allies and foes –Diné, Navajo, O'odham, Yavapais, and Apache– that prompted Arizona's Indian wars. Sheridan pointed out that these encounters reflected "a brutal pattern of provocation and revenge but an understandable one, part of the age-old struggle between the sedentary and the nomadic, the periphery and the frontier" (88–89).

Even after Arizona was declared as a state on February 14, 1912, interrelations among Arizona's indigenous, Mexican, Mexican–American, and Anglo populations continued to impact economic and political sectors, migration and settlement patterns, and social relations in the Southwest.[41] These historical events have shaped Arizona's complex cultural identity and societal structure, and their legacy continues in the present, as the contributions and influence of each of these cultural groups is expressed in distinctive ways throughout the state.

In particular, Phoenix stands out as having a distinct cultural identity in the Arizonian context. Unlike Tucson and other smaller communities to the south, which were founded as Spanish presidios at the end of the eighteenth century, Phoenix was founded almost a century later after the Spanish and Mexican periods of influence in Arizona's history. As historian and scholar, Bradford Luckingham famously noted, Phoenix was "founded largely by Anglos for Anglos [. . .] determined to transplant

[40] For more information on the mass exploitation of Mexican and Mexican–American laborers and employee relations see: Sheridan, Thomas E. "Mexican Labor and Ethnic Conflict in Southern Arizona." In *Arizona – A History, Revised Edition*. University of Arizona Press, 2012. pp. 73–74.
[41] This pattern did not end here; as Bean and Tienda noted, "Chicano workers constituted up to 85 percent of common labor employed in the fields well into the twentieth century" (18).

familiar cultural patterns to their new home" (18). Consequently, its physical and social landscapes exhibit high degrees of Anglo–American influences and traditions. For the purpose of this study, it is critically important to grasp that these multidirectional dynamic exchange systems, which include the "bumping" (Vélez-Ibáñez 31) of ideas, influences, goods, and technologies are not vestiges of the past; rather, they are critical aspects of both historic and contemporary Southwestern cultures and communities.[42]

Following the trend in contemporary Borderland research, my objective is not to focus solely on the historical events that unfolded along the Mexico–United States border. Instead, I seek to understand how the continuity of these systems of exchange and the connections forged between groups and territories have impacted on early and present-day Borderland communities. Though the border may have been established as a dividing line following the Mexican– American War, connections between these lands were not severed; on the contrary, they remain integral to contemporary Borderland culture and its intellectual, artistic, and creative expressions.

In the case of Phoenix, the long legacy of connections and exchanges with Mexico paired with a Borderland consciousness has resulted in the formation of a unique Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity that, albeit heterogenous, reflects its social, ecological, and physical reality. In it, a distinct blend of English and Spanish linguistic influences along with American and Mexican/Latinx cultural symbols and references are fused with

[42] For a Chicanx perspective of the Mexican–American history and identity in the Southwestern United States see: Acuña, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos.* 8th edition, California State University at Northridge, 2015. In particular, see: "Sonora Invaded: The Occupation of Arizona." In *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos.* 8th edition, California State University at Northridge, 2015. pp. 73–94.

elements of the desert landscape. This complex, place-based Borderland identity has been inscribed onto the social and physical space of early and contemporary Phoenix, including Chicanx/Latinx cultural practices, customs, and artistic and cultural production.

Early Hispanic Communities in Phoenix

As noted by Luckingham, Barrios, Foster, Oberle, and Arreola, Phoenix's early bicultural beginnings and its close ties with Mexico have, for the most part, been left out of conventional accounts of its history. As an example, the City of Phoenix's website suggests that "Phoenix's modern history" began with the arrival of Jack Swilling of Wickenburg, devoting just a small paragraph to the Hohokam people, who are the original inhabitants of the Salt River Valley ("City of Phoenix"). There is absolutely no mention of the city's early Mexican community or of any of its members, including Swilling's Mexican wife, on the website. Moreover, there is no acknowledgement of other minority communities, notably Chinese and African–American residents whose contributions were integral for Phoenix's expansion and rising importance as an agricultural as well as industrial center. Instead, the focus is on early Anglo landowners and Anglo-dominated government bodies, such as the first City Council of 1881. As an "official" rendering of Phoenix's history, propagated by the city itself, this example reveals how the widespread participation and contribution of Phoenix's minority population continues to be erased or eclipsed even in the present day.

The extensive research conducted by Daniel Arreola, a cultural geographer and Professor Emeritus of Arizona State University, over the last few decades has been

critical in unveiling the complex ecological, social, and spatial attributes of Phoenix's historic and contemporary Hispanic population. Arreola and Alex Oberle conducted a thorough review of the social and spatial construction of early Phoenix, which, they confirmed, was indeed multi- or at least bi-cultural from the time of its formation. They cited Dean and Reynolds, endorsing their view: "it can certainly be argued that if Jack Swilling was the Father of Phoenix, then Trinidad Escalante, who raised seven [we would like to highlight, bi-cultural] children, was surely Phoenix's mother" (qtd. in Oberle and Arreola 173). The first federal census that was conducted in 1870 indicated that Phoenix's Mexican population comprised 53% of the total population (Oberle and Arreola 173).[43] Although the city underwent a demographic transition in the following decades, the material effects of its multicultural heritage were concretized in its early architecture and infrastructure. For example, Mexican expertise and cultural influence played a role in the construction of the city's roadways, irrigation systems (acequias), private and public edifices and in the introduction of adobe architecture. A popular style in northern Mexico and used by the Pueblo Indians prior to the arrival of the European colonizers in the present-day American Southwest, adobe architecture was introduced to Phoenix by its Mexican residents, who were responsible for constructing many of the city's buildings. Thus, Oberle and Arreola claimed that "it may have been an Anglo-dominated city in 1880, but the landscape was pure Mexico" (173).

Researchers have highlighted the importance of Phoenix's multicultural heritage

[43] In 1870, Phoenix's Mexican residents counted 124 out of a total population of 240 (Oberle and Arreola 173).

in shaping its physical and social landscapes. For example, the city's first Mexican quarter, commonly known as the "Sonora corner of Phoenix" (Oberle and Arreola 175–6), was a significant part of its culturescape.[44] Luckingham has provided a vivid portrayal of life in this small Mexican barrio:

> In 1881 the Mexican neighborhood located along east Monroe Street hosted the celebration and offered fireworks, bonfires, dancing, singing, drinking, and other diversions to the community. Local Mexican leaders, standing on platforms draped with the national colors of Mexico and the United States and displaying portraits of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and George Washington, read the Declaration of Independence and gave patriotic speeches, while the Yucatec Hose Company No. 2, an all-Mexican fire company, and the Mexican Military Company, along with proud Mexican groups and individuals on horseback, paraded to the music of Mexican bands. The celebration always culminated in a grand ball. (19)

In addition, La Inmaculada Concepción de Santa María Church (built in 1881) was a central part of community life in the barrio. Built on land donated by businessmen Jesús Otero, Miguel Peralta, and Paolo Perrazzo, with the help of Phoenix's Mexican residents, the church was dedicated to servicing the needs this community. It was intended to be a place for holding both religious services as well as community events, such as festivals and holiday celebrations (Luckingham 19). Thus, the church was an

[44] Though not Phoenix's sole Mexican barrio, this Mexican quarter was the largest and most prominent, located "along East Monroe Street between Central and Fourth Streets" (Oberle and Arreola 175).

essential part of the city's cultural heritage and a potent symbol of cultural identity and early Latinx placemaking in Phoenix.

However, an influx of Anglo–Americans as a result of domestic migration in the decades that followed changed the population demographics within the city as Phoenix became predominantly Anglo; once representing 53% of the total population in 1870, by 1900 Phoenix's Mexican population was only 14% (Oberle and Arreola 173). This shift had various implications, both material and imagined. For example, in the public sphere, by the end of the nineteenth century adobe architecture[45] was eventually exchanged for brick construction (Oberle and Arreola 173–4), and various city streets and points of interest were renamed. Phoenix's main city "plaza" was renamed as the "city square" in the late 1800s, and Montezuma Street and Cortez Street were respectively renamed as First Street and First Avenue in 1911 (Oberle and Arreola 175–6). Overall, Phoenix's history from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries can be read as a history of social-spatial relations in which the hegemonic position of Anglo–Americans within the city's governmental, economic, and political sectors gave rise to increasing social tensions and discrimination against its minority communities.

Settlement and Migration in Phoenix's Contemporary Chicanx and Latinx Communities

Although an urban renewal program implemented in Phoenix at the end of World War II destroyed its historic Mexican core (Oberle and Arreola), Mexican communities

[45] Despite the fact that most of the original adobe edifices in Phoenix have since been destroyed, Pueblo Revival architecture remains a popular style synonymous with the Southwestern United States.

or barrios continued to develop in several "pockets" throughout the Valley. Many of these enclaves were concentrated in the southern and western areas of the city while others sprung up on its periphery ("Hispanic Historic Property Survey" 30).

Some of the largest of these enclaves were located in the Garfield neighborhood, Grant Park (the oldest barrio west of Central Avenue), Harmon Park/Los Marcos de Niza, El Campito, Central Park, La Sonorita, Cuatro Milpas, and Golden Gate. Sadly, most of these original Chicanx and Mexican barrios have since been destroyed; many bring the victims of urbanization or commercial and industrial rezoning and development projects that were implemented over a period of several decades.

Two projects, in particular, have had devastating consequences for the city's Hispanic barrios: the expansion of Arizona State College (now Arizona State University) in 1954[46]and the construction and later enlargement of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport that was initiated in the late 1970s (Luckingham 68, Dimas 118).[47] The latter was made possible as a result of the West Approach Land Acquisition Project, which led to the razing of one of the city's oldest and largest Hispanic barrios, Golden Gate, and the displacement of an estimated six thousand people. Today, the only part of this barrio that remains standing is the Sacred Heart Church, a beautiful red brick building with boarded up windows and surrounded by a chain link fence that is now located adjacent to the runways of the Sky Harbor International Airport (see Fig. 2.1).

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[46] The expansion of the Arizona State College led to the destruction of the Mickey Mouse Barrio and Barrio al Centro in 1955, as well as additional Tempe barrios in 1956 and 1957 ("Historic Resource Survey").
[47] According to a survey conducted by the City of Phoenix, the expansion of the Sky Harbor International Airport impacted at least seven surrounding minority neighborhoods (mainly Mexican–American and African–American), including Ann Ott, El Campito, Cuatro Milpas, Green Valley, Rio Salado San Juan Batista, and Eastlake Park and 32nd Street, respectively ("Historic Resource Survey").

Fig 2.1. Photograph of the original Sacred Heart Church. Once at the center of the city's Golden Gate Barrio, it now stands adjacent to a vacant lot a short distance away from the runways of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. 24 June, 2020. Author's personal collection.

Yet, despite their tumultuous histories and uncertain futures, Phoenix's Hispanic barrios remain integral to the spatial distribution and social imaginary of the city's contemporary Chicanx and Latinx communities Oberle (2006, 2008) and Arreola (2008) have argued that Phoenix's Chicanx and Latinx barrios are unique, particularly in the context of the American Southwest, as they were not constructed upon pre-existing Spanish colonial settlements but were for the most part settled in the twentieth century after the Great Depression and World War II (Oberle, *Latino Business* 151). Covering a spectrum that ranges from historic to newly established or upcoming communities, these barrios exhibit a mix of "both urban and suburban characteristics" (Oberle, *Latino Business* 151) and a fairly even balance of native and foreign born residents. Located in a

city that is now considered a "fast-growing Latino hub" (Oberle, *Latino Business* 151), these barrios are "increasingly fast-growing, spatially dispersed, and heterogeneous" (Oberle, *Latino Business* 151). They are critical components of the city's spatial, social, and economic configurations, exemplifying contemporary Latinx placemaking practices in Phoenix. As Oberle and Arreola have observed, "Latino settlement in Phoenix proper is as dynamic as the city's restless and everchanging geography" (179).

Demographic trends similar to those seen in other parts of the United States have been apparent in Phoenix, entailing large-scale growth of its Latinx population, estimated at 261%, during the period from 1980–2000 (Suro and Singer 4).[48] Oberle and Arreola, who have conducted extensive studies of contemporary Latinx communities in Phoenix, outlined different types of Chicanx/Latinx barrios found in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area (Oberle and Arreola 178).[49] These researchers made a striking observation at the time of the publication of their article in 2008, namely that the city was once again undergoing a process of transformation as a result of the expansion of its Chicanx/Latinx communities into neighborhoods in suburban Phoenix that were traditionally not Latinx (Oberle and Arreola 177–8).

This trend has been ongoing since 2008; between 2000 and 2019, the growth rate of Phoenix's Hispanic population was 92%, with this population currently accounting for more than 42% of the city's total population (United States Census). According to the

[48] Oberle and Arreola named the decade from 1990–2000 a critical growth period for Phoenix's Latinx population, noting that "as recently as 1990, suburban Phoenix was only 13 percent Hispanic, and the larger suburbs were between 5 and 17 percent Latino" (178).
[49] Among them, Oberle and Arreola defined the following types of Latinx barrios: Hispanic Core, Latino Dynamo, The Hispanic Edge/Satellite Barrios, Latino Fringe (181).

latest United States Census report published in July 2019, the Hispanic populations of Mesa, Tempe, and Glendale now stand at 27.7%, 22.4%, and a whopping 37.2%, respectively. Hispanic populations are even larger in cities adjacent to Phoenix, namely Avondale (50.9%) and Guadalupe (68.4%) (United States Census). Furthermore, recent census data reveal the growth of Chicanx/Latinx communities in other parts of the city not previously Hispanic, including Scottsdale, which in July 2019 reported a Hispanic population of 10.4% (compared to only 7.2% in 2010), and Gilbert with a population of 16.9% in 2019 (compared to 13.6% in 2010) (United States Census).

Though there have been no subsequent studies to expand on Oberle and Arreola's findings regarding Phoenix's contemporary Chicanx/Latinx population (post 2008), it is safe to say that the city continues to be a "major gateway for incoming Latino immigrants" (Oberle, *Latino Business* 151). Moreover, in recent years, the arrival of an enormous number of out-of-state migrants (particularly from neighboring states like California) and of international migrants, augmented by the influx of refugees and asylum seekers (many from Central and South America), will undoubtedly add to the diversity of Phoenix's Latinx population.

It is conceivable that these newcomers, together with Phoenix's current Chicanx/Latinx residents, will help to shape the future of the city's ever-changing physical and social landscapes. Thus, Phoenix may potentially constitute a microcosm of the transformative changes occurring at the national level, which have been described as the "Latinization of the United States" (Davis *Magical Urbanism* 21). In December 2019, after seventeen years the Phoenix City Council finally named the location of its future

Latino cultural center. This decision was perhaps not coincidental; as noted in the Capital Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study prepared for the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, the center was destined to represent and serve a "vibrant, and ever evolving" community whose contributions, despite being "diverse and rich" are "segmented and unexposed" ("Phoenix Latino Cultural Center" 5). According to the findings of the aforementioned study, "Nearing almost half of Phoenix's total population, a visible Latino arts and culture presence, reflective of the City's residents and experiences, is a vision shared by many" ("Phoenix Latino Cultural Center" 5). Though city officials are still facing disagreement over its location and funding, moving forward on plans for Phoenix's long-awaited Latino cultural center is an important step in increasing the visibility and physical presence of such an integral part of its population.

"Phoenix is Not a Real City" and Other Popular Myths

"Phoenix is the Nation's 5th Largest– but is it a 'Real' City?," which is the title of an article published in a local Phoenix newspaper in June of 2017, expresses a prevalent sentiment among both locals and visitors (Goth). After I moved to the "Valley of the Sun," I repeatedly heard—and continue to hear—statements such as "Phoenix is not a real city" and "Phoenix has no culture." I was struck by how different this city is from any of the major urban centers that I have visited, with the exception, perhaps, of Los Angeles. As the airplane descended before landing at Sky Harbor International Airport, I observed from my window an enormous land mass with seemingly endless subdivisions painted in neutral tones. I could see backyard swimming pools, industrial areas and strip

malls, and mountain formations all separated and neatly organized into a grid-like pattern. The sheer size and extent of Phoenix was overwhelming, but who lived here and where was everybody?

In the same article, cited above, Brenna Goth describes the "spread out" design of the city that is "built for cars" (Goth). She notes the lack of visibility and of funding of cultural institutions as some of the factors that have contributed to the perpetuation the widespread myth that Phoenix is not a "real" city. Moreover, she cites local author and journalist Jon Talton, who attributes the lack of any particular affection for Phoenix among its residents, in comparison to other large cities, to its "resort culture": "too many people who live in Phoenix consider their true home somewhere else" (Talton qtd. in Goth).[50] However, the nearly deserted sidewalks belie the fact that the city is growing, and it is growing *fast*. A news article, published in May 2019, named Phoenix as one of the fastest growing cities in the country, stating that "Phoenix welcomed 25,288 new residents between 2017 and 2018– more than any other American city" (Gallen). With a land area that exceeds that of Chicago, New York City, or Los Angeles, Phoenix has ample space to grow. The direction in which the city is heading becomes apparently during a drive through the Valley, revealing a profusion of residential communities and commercial and retail complexes springing up at every corner. Phoenix's spatial structure and organization is quintessentially post-modern, The Phoenix Metropolitan Area, which is best traversed by car, comprises over twenty communities amalgamated into an area

[50] Jon Talton is a former columnist for the *Arizona Republic* newspaper and the author of "The Rogue Columnist," a blog which focuses on urban issues especially in Phoenix and Arizona. Though Talton now resides in Seattle, he continues his blog from his new home.

spanning almost fifteen thousand square miles. In most areas of Phoenix, maneuvering the cityscape by foot, or even by public transportation, is a feat in itself. A drive through the multiple municipalities that make up the "Valley of the Sun" reveals an ever-changing, alternate mapping within the seemingly standard, grid-like parameters of the city's streets. Though Phoenix is not known for its multiculturalism —a dimension that is both underexplored within the city as well as underrepresented in its image conveyed to outsiders—multiple cultural enclaves that constitute an undeniable part of its physical and imagined landscapes are unveiled during a drive through the city. Phoenix differs from other major American urban centers, like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, or Miami, where clusters of ethnic or immigrant communities are often concentrated within specific, recognizable geographic spaces termed *enclaves* or *ethnoburbs*. Here, there is no "Little Mexico," "Little India," or "China Town,"[51] and the presence of the city's diverse ethnic and cultural communities is not clearly apparent in its downtown core. General statements can be made about the concentration of certain communities in different parts of the city. For example, there are sizeable Asian communities clustered in the southeastern suburbs of Chandler or Mesa; pockets of Indian communities in Tempe, close to Arizona State University, as well as in North Phoenix, Chandler, and Mesa; and Mexican and Mexican–American communities in West and South Phoenix. However, these neighborhoods are not represented on a Phoenix city map; nor are they considered major tourist destinations. Nevertheless, they do exist, assuming the form of housescapes,

[51] In the early twentieth century a Chinatown was established in Phoenix. Luckingham has described it as "the most tightly knit ethnic community in the city" in 1910 (*Minorities,* 60). For more information on the history of Phoenix's Chinatown see: Luckingham, Bradford. *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American, and African American Communities, 1860–1992*.

public and commercial signage, restaurants, specialty shops, grocery stores, as well as cultural and religious institutions that subtly reveal the presence of various "second cities" within the cityscape.[52]

Against this background, I would like to discuss some of the key factors that have contributed to Phoenix's unique socio-spatial landscape that make the city worthy of study. The first factor concerns the important roles of race and place in the early formation and development of Phoenix's cityscape. Scholars and researchers have shed light on the city's recent and rapid expansion in contrast to the pattern of growth of other major American cities. In his book *A Brief History of Phoenix* (2015), Talton referred to the accelerated growth of Phoenix, consider as a relatively new city, as "quite an accomplishment" (9). He noted that "other American cities, such as Chicago in the late nineteenth century, had grown faster. But none was in such a hostile environment and isolated location. None among the very biggest was so relatively young" (Talton 9). Behind the city's population boom, however, is a long history of racial exclusion and marginalization that has contributed to the shaping of its physical and social geography.

Bolin, Grineski, and Collins explored the impacts of urban development patterns, housing policies as well as investment and planning decisions on Phoenix's minority communities. They pointed to local, state, and national governments' policies on economic development and urbanization initiated by and reflecting the interests of a

[52] Mike Davis famously cited the presence of "second cities" in Los Angeles in his article "Chinatown, Part Two? The 'Internationalization' of Downtown Los Angeles." In the case of the city's Latinx population, he stated:"the Spanish-speaking neighbourhoods of L.A. are more than melting pots for eventual assimilation to some hyphenated ethnicity. Together with their integral worlds of work and itineraries of movement, these residential environments comprise a virtually parallel urban structure- a second city" (77).

dominant Anglo–American population, which emerged in the early twentieth century, continuing for several decades post–World War II. These patterns, they argued, contributed to a "century long pattern grounded in racial exclusion and class privilege" (Bolin et al. 166).

In particular, these authors placed the spotlight on South Phoenix as being home to "the city's oldest African–American and Latino neighborhoods, places which have until recently contained the majority of Phoenix's minority populations" (Bolin et al. 157). The geographic distribution of the city's historic minority populations, which are concentrated in South Phoenix, can be attributed to various factors, leading to invisible and physical barriers that have shaped Phoenix's socio-spatial structure. Specifically, they have generated "a persistent north-south geography of uneven development across the city" (Bolin et al. 159). One of these factors was the construction of the Maricopa and Phoenix lines of the Southern Pacific railroad in the late nineteenth century. These railway lines were pivotal in the history of Phoenix and Arizona, as they connected the city to other major trading centers, resulting in a sharp increase in industrial and commercial land use in nearby neighborhoods (Bolin et al. 159). This concentration of industrial zones and agricultural fields in South Phoenix led to the formation of minority-dominated neighborhoods in the surrounding areas, as most of those employed in the construction of the railroads and nearby factories were of African–American, Chinese, or

Mexican descent.[53] The subsequent flooding of the Salt River in 1891 further segmented the area as Anglo residents continued to move northward.

> Anglos who could afford it were encouraged to live on higher ground, away from potential flood damage. They lived in additions north of Washington, while poorer neighborhoods containing economically and socially disadvantaged groups became more apparent in the lower areas of south Phoenix. (Luckingham 25)

Phoenix's socio-spatial configuration continued to be shaped by planning decisions and policies, including discriminatory housing policies, throughout the course of the twentieth century, which particularly impacted the residents of South Phoenix. Among these initiatives was the creation of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a government agency established to provide financial assistance to home owners at risk of foreclosure following the 1929 economic crash. Through the implementation of red lining policies, minority neighborhoods within major urban centers, including those in South Phoenix, were deemed "hazardous" (Bolin et al. 163), with their residents thus becoming ineligible for HOLC financial assistance. Similar discriminatory housing policies continued into the 1940s and 1950s, as discriminatory mortgage lending practices and residential restrictive race covenants, prohibiting the lease or purchase of properties by residents of color (normally African Americans),

[53] Interestingly, the railway is still a strong symbol in the imaginary associated with Phoenix urban space, as South Phoenix is often referred to (in a derogatory way) as the part of the city "South of the tracks."

contributed to the rise of a segregated city space with a majority of white-only neighborhoods located to the north of the city (Bolin et al.164).

Apart from these discriminatory housing policies, the segregation and marginalization of Phoenix's minority communities also influenced in its cityscape. African–American residents were banned from all-white schools and many residential areas, while official and unofficial segregation laws restricted people of color from swimming in public pools, dining in some restaurants, and shopping in stores in certain areas (Luckingham 51). Although Phoenix's Chicanx and Mexican communities were not subjected to the same racial segregation laws as were African–American residents, they also had to contend with social prejudices and discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, and education.

> Socio-spatial discrimination against Latinos was more pronounced in Phoenix than other Southwestern cities in the region that originated as Spanish colonial and Mexican settlements (Dimas 1999, Sheridan 1995). While the *barrios* of Phoenix provided settings for the continuation of Mexican cultural traditions and practices, they were contained there by an all–White police force (Dimas 1999). (Bolin et al. 161)

Along with such invisible barriers, which include social and cultural discrimination and marginalization, other critical geographic markers have been pivotal in the formation and development of Phoenix's socio-spatial structure. Among the most notable examples of these markers in the twentieth century have been the construction of two major interstate highways and the expansion of the Sky Harbor International Airport.

The construction of Interstate 17 (I–17), a north–south highway that was completed in the 1970s, and of I–10 (completed in the 1980s) have especially impacted on the spatial distribution of the city's minority communities. As Bolin, Grineski, and Collins noted, "Interstate 17 was placed directly across Latino neighborhoods of South Phoenix paralleling the historic rail corridor" (165). Furthermore, the expansion of the city's main airport, Sky Harbor International Airport, led to the forced displacement of many of its Chicanx and Mexican residents through the demolition of the Golden Gate barrio (one of the city's largest Chicanx barrios). All of these factors relating to issues of race and place have contributed to shaping Phoenix's cityscape.

A second key that has contributed to Phoenix's unique socio-spatial landscape in its large population of "transplants"[54]and "snowbirds"[55] I had never heard of these terms prior to my arrival in Arizona, but as it turned out, I too am a "transplant." From the second half of the twentieth century, the Southwestern United States has attracted domestic immigration from all over the country, especially from the northeastern and midwestern states, with promises of beautiful weather and new economic prospects and opportunities under the desert sun (Danver 119–20). Especially during the decades following World War II, the region witnessed a population boom after it was connected to the rest of the country via transportation systems, including interstate highways and the railroads, attracting more southbound migrations (Danver 119–120). Subsequently, from the 1960s to the 1980s, many of these visitors began to relocate to the southern states.

[54] "Transplants" is a colloquial term commonly used to refer to residents who have moved to the area.
[55] Luckingham defined "snowbirds" as visitors to the region whose "length of stay [is] one or more months" (*History of a Southwestern Metropolis*, 232).

Jack August, an author and former Arizona State historian, referred to "the Midwesternization of the American West" (qtd. in Pela), as "Middlewestern settlers were interested not in building a cosmopolitan city such as San Francisco, but a series of connecting villages or communities, villages filled with likeminded people. White people" (qtd. in Pela).

Talton suggested that the impact of such a large population of "snow birds" and "transplants" was a possible factor accounting for the general lack of recognition and interest in the city's history. He commented on the common perception of Phoenix as a place that "has no history" (Talton 11) as follows:

> For hundreds of thousands of newcomers who move there yet still consider "home" back in the Midwest, it might even seem that way. They buy houses in new developments on the metropolitan fringes, shop at sparkling malls and speed along an extensive freeway system. While they might dabble in some of the cowboy lore of Arizona, they know next to nothing about the city's past. This lack of knowledge is supercharged by population churn: large numbers of people come to Phoenix, but large numbers also depart. (11)[56]

This trend has continued in recent years, with the arrival of a massive influx of young professionals fleeing unaffordable living costs in adjacent states and attracted by ample employment opportunities, including the new hub of high-profile technology firms

[56] On the topic, Talton rejects the common view of Phoenix as having "no history" (11), naming it "one of the great accomplishments of American civilization" (11) and commending it as "a place with a rich and compelling past" (11).

in the Valley.[57] The "transplant" population, comprising newcomers to the state, is growing steadily. In 2018, the United States Census Bureau reported that the county with the largest population increase in the United States was Maricopa County, with a population of 4,410,824 in July 2018 compared with 3,817,359 in April 2010, evidencing a rise of over 15 percent ("New Census Bureau"). This population increase continues to be a major factor driving Phoenix's physical and economic growth, resulting in spikes in residential real estate prices and promised economic opportunities projected in 2021. The new residents of this "transient city" (Talton 11), who are indicative of an ever-changing demographic profile, will continue to redefine Phoenix's physical and cultural geography.

A third factor accounting for Phoenix's social-spatial structure is the lack of acknowledgement and recognition of the city's Chicanx and Latinx population and their contribution to Phoenix's past and present. In their pioneering study titled "Resurgent Mexican Phoenix," published more than a decade ago in 2008, geographers Alex P. Oberle and Daniel D. Arreola debunked the popular image of Phoenix as a "fundamentally Anglo place" (Oberle and Arreola 172), drawing attention to the general overshadowing or silencing of the city's Mexican history and influences. Attributing this phenomenon to a process of "selective story telling" (Oberle and Arreola 172) and the "whitewashing of Phoenix's Mexican ancestry" (173) in which its Hispanic heritage had been deliberately substituted with images of Midwestern settlers and cowboys, Oberle and Arreola contested this image by recovering information on Phoenix's historic

[57] Recent reports have named Phoenix "the Silicon Desert." A report published in January 2020 listed four top Silicon Valley companies moving to Tempe Town Lake in 2020, attracted by "the availability of a highly trained workforce, a lower cost of doing business and a tremendous quality of life" (Pineda).

Mexican population. For example, they named important Mexican figures in Phoenix's history, who are largely absent in conventional textbooks, including Swilling's Mexican wife, Trinidad Mejia Escalante (1849–1925). In addition, they emphasized the material effects of the city's multicultural heritage as manifested in the city's early architecture, design, and construction of private and public buildings. They noted that "not only were Mexicans significant as a majority population in early Phoenix, they were critical to the construction of the first cultural landscapes of the city" **(**Oberle and Arreola 173). More than a decade after the study conducted by Oberle and Arreola was published, their words still apply: "representations of contemporary Phoenix ignore its original Mexican heritage and instead promote images of verdant golf courses, azure swimming pools, and a pseudo–Mediterranean lifestyle" (Oberle and Arreola 171). In the present context of a population boom, newcomers to the Phoenix Metropolitan Area are met with marketing images of a cosmopolitan metropolis filled with skyscrapers and luxury condos that reflect a global city aesthetic, which is shaping current urban renewal initiatives; one that is completely disconnected from the actual history of this city. Tourists can be found purchasing sarape blankets and other traditional Mexican craft and décor items from souvenir shops in Old Town Scottsdale or eating street tacos at one of the city's trendy Mexican-inspired restaurants. However, truly authentic vestiges of a "forgotten Mexican past" (Oberle and Arreola 172) are still largely eclipsed and excluded from the city's main cultural and historical sites, including its monuments and museums, tourist services, and government resources.

A fourth key factor that has shaped Phoenix's social-spatial structure is political, comprising the legislation and actions taken at local and state levels that have impacted Arizona's "moral geography"[58] and its reputation. In recent decades, Arizona has featured centrally in conversations relating to immigration and border control and security at national and international levels. In their book *Arizona Firestorm: Global Immigration Realities, National Media, and Provincial Politics* (2012), researchers Otto Santa Ana and Celeste González de Bustamante have provided an in-depth analysis of past and present political legislation in Arizona as well as the social, economic, and political factors that have influenced relations between the Anglo, Mexican, and Mexican–American populations in the Southwestern United States. In the second chapter of the book titled "Arizona and the Making of a State of Exclusion, 1912–2012," González de Bustamante reviews historic discriminatory laws and policies in Arizona as well as the implementation in 2010 of the "Support our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act" law (known as SB 1070) and "House Bill 2281" (HB 2281) that turned the state into a "Show Me Your Papers State" (Santa Ana and González de Bustamante 19). As one of the harshest laws targeting undocumented immigration in the country, SB 1070 gave local law enforcement officers the power to determine and detain those suspected of being undocumented based on "reasonable suspicion." Later that same year, HB 2281 was introduced in Arizona during the tenure of Governor Jan Brewer.[59]

[58] Celeste González de Bustamante defined "moral geography" as: "a contested space where ethical choices are made about 'a particular people and place, and [. . .] also an 'internal logic' that belongs to a particular people and place" (Santa Ana and González de Bustamante 22).

[59] House Bill 2281 prohibited "a school district or charter school from including in its program of instruction any courses or classes that:

The law targeted the Tucson Unified School District and sought to ban all ethnic studies programs in the District, including its Mexican American Studies Program.[60] Protestors and educators in favor of these programs saw the law as an attack on the country's Mexican and Mexican–American heritage as well as an attempt to deny their contributions to the cultural, political, social, and intellectual history of the United States.

Both laws were met with boycotts, protests, and lawsuits on the national and international stages.[61] SB 1070 was openly condemned by a variety of public figures, including the singer Shakira, former President Barak Obama, the Major League Baseball Players Association, and Reverend Al Sharpton and Dolores Huerta, both activists, who denounced the measure as a form of racial profiling that had traumatic effects on the state's social fabric.[62] As noted by González de Bustamante, the implementation of discriminatory legal measures, notably SB1070 and HB2281, has affected Arizona's "moral geography," fueling increased social tensions and contributing to an environment of distrust and discrimination (Santa Ana and González de Bustamante 22).

A final factor that has contributed to shaping Phoenix's unique socio-spatial structure is its growing and increasingly diverse Chicanx/Latinx population and the impact of this population on the city's social and physical geography. As one of the southern states that borders with Mexico, it is not surprising that Arizona maintains close

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1. promote the overthrow of the United States government. 2. promote resentment toward a race or class of people. 3. are designed for pupils of a particular ethnic group 4. advocate ethnic solidarity instead of treatment of pupils as individuals" (Arizona State Legislature) ("House Bill 2281").

[61] In Phoenix, tens of thousands of people including former mayor Phil Gordon came together on May 29, 2010 to rally against SB 1070 in what would be the second largest protest in the state. Their actions were echoed by similar protests other major cities around the country including Los Angeles and Dallas.

[62] In 2020 Phoenix's artistic community will present a series of exhibits marking the tenth anniversary of the implementation of SB1070 and outlining some of its impacts on the city's social and physical landscapes.

ties with Mexico that are expressed in tangible as well as intangible ways. In the contemporary context, Oberle and Arreola have described Phoenix's economic and linguistic landscapes as living examples of its visible "Mexicanidad" (186). Though it is true that the majority of the Latinx population in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area is of Mexican or Chicanx/Mexican–American origin, Oberle and Arreola noted the lack of representation of its heterogenous character, emphasizing the presence of what historian Lesley Byrd Simpson denominated "many Mexicos" (qtd. in Oberle and Arreola 182).[63] A drive through Phoenix reveals the rich representation of diverse Mexican regionalism present in the "Valley of the Sun," with various locales owned and frequented by immigrants from Sonora, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and more.[64] These spaces are an important part of the city's physical and imagined landscapes, not only as indicators of a thriving economic sector but also as places with distinct cultural identities and communities.

The Latinization processes unfolding in Phoenix's cultural enclaves, which are representative of those occurring all over the United States, have been explored as essential forms of Latinx placemaking by several researchers, including Oberle and Arreola, Lara, Cross, Koptiuch,[65] and Gober:

[63] On the topic, Oberle and Arreola noted: "Just as Americans do not originate from a United States, neither do Mexicans come from a Mexico. Rather, we are all rooted in a region and a locale within our respective nations" (182–3).
[64] Oberle and Arreola placed special emphasis on the names of shops (188–9) and carnicerías as examples of Mexican regionalism in Phoenix (182).
[65] Geographer Kristin Koptiuch examined the establishment of taquerías as signs of contemporary Latinx placemaking in Phoenix in her innovative multimodal study, "Taquerías Conversas: Latinx Immigrants Remake the Flickering Urban Landscape of Phoenix" (2019).

> The concurrent existence of pan–Hispanic, Mexican national, and regional Mexican identities reaffirms that assimilation and cultural change is not a simple, linear, start-to-finish process. On the contrary, the broadcasting or marketing of particular Mexican or Latino cultures exhibits characteristics of both segmented assimilation and transnationalism. (Oberle and Arreola 190)

A report released in May 2019 identified Phoenix as the fastest growing city in the United States (Gallen). However, a closer look at the numbers reveals a rapidly changing demographic. United States Census reports show that Phoenix is not only a growing city, but it is also becoming an increasingly diverse city. Among the fastest growing populations in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area and surrounding cities are Latinx and Asian communities (United States Census). Consonant with the national trend, Arizona's Latinx population has tripled over the last twenty-five years, surpassing the growth rate of the Anglo–Saxon population (Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce 14–15).[66]

So what does all of this mean? This new population increase coupled with recent immigration, particularly from Latin and South America, will undoubtedly lead to the continued expansion of the city's Chicanx and Latinx communities and to an increasingly diverse population that will result in dramatic changes in Phoenix's material and imagined landscapes. City spaces are fluid and in a state of continual transformation, as

[66] Between 2000 and 2015 Arizona's Hispanic population grew 62 percent while its Anglo population grew only 15 percent (Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce 14–15). Maricopa County is projected to be a minority-majority population by 2020.

they are formed and molded by their residents. Perhaps some of the biggest changes will not be represented on city maps or tourist brochures, but they will surely contribute to Phoenix's continued status as an interesting place that is worthy of study. In the predictive words of Oberle and Arreola, written more than a decade ago, "In Phoenix, a city with a distinctive yet largely disregarded Mexican heritage, a cultural transformation is under way" (191).

The role of demographic changes and the exchange of social, economic, and technological systems between the different groups that have inhabited Arizona throughout its history, from its prehistoric to its Spanish, Mexican, and American periods, is undeniable in its contemporary cultural identity. In its capital city, a unique and dynamic Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity takes shape in Phoenix's artistic and cultural production, as one that encompasses diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic influences coupled with the social, ecological, and physical realities of life in the "Valley of the Sun." As demonstrated in the work of Stella Pope Duarte, Lucinda Y Hinojos (La Morena), and Annie Lopez, this Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity and aesthetic is translated into various mediums, revealing complex creative expressions of a distinct Borderland consciousness.

CHAPTER 2

PAPER

CHICANX LITERARY PRODUCTION IN PHOENIX:

ENTRE CEMENTO Y DESIERTO: URBAN LANDSCAPES IN THE NARRATIVES OF STELLA POPE DUARTE

Over the past few decades, the study of the city has emerged as an increasingly popular topic among researchers, architects, philosophers, and artists alike. Recent studies have approached the city as a cultural concept, describing it as a constantly evolving, dynamic organism. Along these lines, in *The Urban Environment.* (1983) geographer Ian Douglas offered a holistic interpretation, saying "cities are both social and physical structures. While they may be analysed from many viewpoints, life in the city is an amalgam of social encounters and physical experiences" (1). His definition considered the city an ecosystem and placed emphasis on the relationship between dwellers and their built environment, as its inhabitants produce, shape, and consume the urban space. Within the scope of Chicanx and Latinx studies, the city has played a critical role in the formation, development, and shaping of urban Chicanx/Latinx communities across the United States. In particular, the concept of the barrio is key to understanding the relationship between Latinx residents and city space, offering critical insights into the history of Latinx communities in the United States. For example, the study of the barrio can allow for a socio-spatial analysis of historical, political, and social issues, including but not limited to: segregation, displacement, and community building. In recent years,

studies by Raúl Homero Villa (2000), Mike Davis (2000), Arlene Dávila and Augustin Lao-Montes (2001), and David Diaz (2005) have offered groundbreaking perspectives in Latinx spatial theory, especially in major urban centers like Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles, and New York. As a collective, their work underscored the significance of the barrio as "the foundation of Chicana/o urbanism throughout the United States" (Diaz 3) while bringing attention to its ambivalent nature:

> In terms of spatial relations, it is historically a zone of segregation and repression. Uneven development, inflated rents, low wage labor, lack of housing, and the worst abuses of urban renewal [. . .] Conversely, within the context of everyday life, *el barrio* is the reaffirmation of culture, a defense of space, an ethnically bounded sanctuary, and the spiritual zone of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o identity. (3)

Diaz's interpretation of the barrio highlighted the importance of the barrio as both a physical entity and social concept, as a space for Chicanx/Latinx culture, collective identity, and resistance. In the southwestern United States, Diaz traced the history of barrio socialization and spatial practices, including *mutualista* community relations and shared economic, social, and cultural networks, back to the sixteenth century (3). Diaz made the following claim:

> During the mid-to late 1800s, these cultural forces became essential to the survival of Chicana/o Mexicana/o identity when this culture was confronted with the new Euro–American trinity of repression, political marginalization, and economic exploitation. (3)

Similarly, in *Barrio-Logos, Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (2000) Villa shed light on the importance of barrio social practices and cultural and artistic traditions and exchanges in Southern California Chicanx communities. Like Diaz, Villa also paid tribute to the barrio's physical and social attributes, as a "literal place of difference and a complex site of material and symbolic production" (Villa 16).

As the largest urban center in the American Southwest, Phoenix's barrio communities also exhibit many of the same characteristics. Despite being relatively new communities, especially in contrast to other cities such as Tucson, San Antonio, or El Paso that were formed on long standing Spanish and later Mexican presidios, Phoenix's barrios are a testament to the conservation and continuity of Chicanx/Latinx cultural values, traditions, and aesthetics[67] against more than a century of social, economic, and political factors that have threatened their existence. To this end, the literary works of Stella Pope Duarte have introduced a novel perspective to Chicanx artistic and cultural production in the southwestern United States, offering readers a unique and intimate glimpse into life in Phoenix's barrios protagonized by their residents themselves. Born in South Phoenix in the La Sonorita barrio (Foster, *Glimpses* 120), Pope Duarte continues to reside in the city. As a result, her work reflects a deep familiarity with Phoenix's barrios, painting a realist portrait of life the quintessential post-modern city. Consequently, in this chapter I will focus on three works that best depict Phoenix's Chicanx/Latinx residences

[67] Daniel D. Arreola has famously referred to certain housescapes as an example of Chicanx aesthetics expressed in the residential sphere; see Arreola, Daniel. "Placemaking and Latino Urbanism in a Phoenix Mexican Immigrant Community." *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability: Latino Urbanism: Placemaking in 21st Century American Cities*, vol. 5, no. 2-3, 2012, pp. 157–70.

and their spaces: *Fragile Night* (1997), *Let Their Spirits Dance* (2002), and *Women Who Live in Coffee Shops and Other Stories* (2010).[68] In each narrative, Pope Duarte represents the barrio as a physical and imagined space that serves as the center for cultural, social, and economic networks among its residents, mainly members of minority groups. As David William Foster noted, though authors Alberto Ríos and Justo Alarcón also featured Phoenix in their texts, "Stella Pope Duarte's fiction projects a profound sense of Chicano life in Phoenix [. . .] there is virtually no competing writing, as so few Chicanos have written about life in the city" (*Glimpses* 165). Specifically, these narratives situate readers in the barrios of downtown and central Phoenix during different time periods; *Fragile Night* recounts personal tales of its residents from the early twentieth century, *Let Their Spirits Dance* is set both during and in the decades following the Vietnam War (1955–1975), and *Women Who Live in Coffee Shops and Other Stories* takes place in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, Pope Duarte's body of work serves as a literary ethnography of the city's history spanning the second half of the twentieth century, reflecting the passing of time in Arizona's capital through its spatial structure and socialscape. For example, South Phoenix's early industrial beginnings are portrayed through Mexican and Chicanx protagonists who are employed at local meat packing facilities and laundries (Pope Duarte, "Penguin's Mother" 151), rezoning laws lead to demographic shifts in barrio communities as modest Chicanx homes are converted into drug houses (*Let Their Spirits* 11), and economic downturn and redevelopment policies leave Van Buren Street, once Phoenix's vibrant main strip, "flanked on both sides by

[68] Though we do not include them in our analysis, other major works by the author are *If I Die in Juarez* (2008) and *Raul H. Yzaguirre: Seated at a Table of Power* (2016).

mismatched buildings, one-of-a-kind structures that defied building codes" (*Women* 1). Together with constant references to specific geographic locations and local establishments, these examples reflect an undisputable focus on the Phoenix barrio.

"She Knew That Only the Night Could Endure Her Pain": Somaethetics, Feminism, and Embodied Chicanx Subjectivity in *Fragile Night* (1997)

Pope Duarte's first published book *Fragile Night*, a collection of fifteen short narratives, introduces readers to the focus of most of her subsequent works: the lives and spaces of barrio residents. Each story recounts the personal struggles of its main characters: dysfunctional or failed relationships, illness, and the loss of loved ones, among others. Though there are few geographic or time markers, especially in comparison to Pope Duarte's later work, the action takes place in a decidedly urban, transnational setting, moving from colonias in Mexico City to the barrios of South Phoenix. Accordingly, detailed descriptions of urban architecture and design are plentiful; from the "fine old houses, some with Mexican flags draped over the balconies, and landscaped lawns manicured to perfection" (Pope Duarte, "Doña Dolores" 172) in upper class Mexican neighborhoods to the "bleak yellowed lawns, sagging rooftops, and broken windows" ("Penguin's Mother" 151) of Phoenix's projects. Despite taking place on both sides of the Mexico–United States border, these geographic shifts are practically seamless, facilitated by a sense of cultural continuity that functions as a common thread joining the entire text. Constant references to travel back and forth across the border coupled with the Spanish names and language of the characters as well as their Mexican

customs and traditions exemplify close ties to Mexico that continue to be integral to life in the Borderlands, especially in its barrios.

At times, the protagonists' personal hardships are represented spatially via descriptions of their domestic space. For example, in the case of "Penguin's Mother," a poor single mother, she must serve dinner on a "warped table top on two concrete blocks stacked in the space vacated by the deformed limb" (Pope Duarte 151), surrounded by "Cheap prints from the Goodwill store [that] hung on the walls" (152). The urban space serves not only as a backdrop to the action but oftentimes acts as an extension of the characters; the "cold" (Pope Duarte, "Penguin's Mother" 152), "crowded apartments" (152) of Phoenix's barrios serve to subvert stereotypes surrounding "the dream of Los Estados Unidos" ("Lucinda María" 214). This theme is repeated as Anita leaves her wealthy Mexican family to follow her boyfriend to the United States, only to find out "her American hero turned out to be nothing more than a dishwasher who traveled about the world by his wits" (Pope Duarte, "Doña Dolores" 182), and Estevan firmly maintains he has no desire to leave Mexico, saying "I don't like the fast way people live over there. Americans live under pressure and don't even know that their very lives are the price for such a pace" ("The Dangerous Game" 242).

Despite the fact that each chapter constitutes a separate, unrelated narrative, all of the protagonists from young Pepito to the elderly Mrs. Rivera are connected through a common theme: their pain. In each case, the protagonists face extremely challenging situations in which they suffer emotional or physical pain (and often times, both). Through their stories of hardship, Pope Duarte brings to light many of the issues that

plague the barrio community, from discriminatory cultural and gender stereotypes to abuse in almost all of its forms —substance, emotional, physical, and sexual— as well as the extreme poverty that makes the protagonists, mainly female, extremely vulnerable.

These protagonists internalize, process, and mitigate their pain, whether it be emotional or physical,[69] via a somaesthetic connection.[70] In concordance with Shusterman's proposed somaesthetics, the body or *soma* forms part of a holistic entity in which all emotions, environmental stimuli, and experiences are absorbed and internalized (*Aesthetic* 2). At the core of this new praxis is the concept of the "living, sentient body as the organizing core of experience" (Shusterman, *Body* xii) and the cultivation of body consciousness. Both concepts form an integral part of the narratives, as the protagonists reflect a heightened bodily awareness and often directly express their bodily responses to emotional and physical stimuli. In *Fragile Night* the body acts as a palimpsest onto which the protagonist's pain is transcribed in various forms; characters whose hearts "ached with pain" (Pope Duarte, "What La Llorona Knew" 30) for lost children and lovers, and the "bruised bod[ies]" ("Penguin's Mother" 167) of young children show the effects of illness and physical abuse at the hands of others. At times, their pain is personified, described as an intruder into their bodies –or rather, *soma*–, as in the case of Angélica whose "pain entered her like a furious blow to her stomach. It traveled through her body,

[69] For more information on the topic of pain and the body, see Scarry *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.* Oxford University Press, 1987.
[70] Here I employ the term *somaesthetics* as defined by Shusterman to refer to "the critical study and meliorative cultivation of the body as the site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning" (*Aesthetic* 1).

owning her like an unseen hand, touching her in the dark" (Pope Duarte, "Once for Pepito" 256) after the loss of her husband and the declining health of her young son.

When not addressed, this pain manifests itself in different ways; for example, in "Doña Dolores" the loss of a child initiates the physical and emotional transformation of the beautiful Margarita Estrella, described as a "star" (Pope Duarte 173), into "a woman filled with sorrow and pain" (173), "robbing her of her radiant smile" (180). Similarly, in "Cobra," Carlos is literally immobilized by the trauma he suffered decades ago as a solider in the Vietnam War; his "body trembles" (Pope Duarte 42) and he "opens his mouth to speak, but the words won't go past his lips" (43). It is only when the protagonists come to terms with their pain through cathartic expression that they are relieved of it. For example, Margarita's bodily pain, "stomachaches, pains in her chest, and headaches that wouldn't go away" (Pope Duarte, "Doña Dolores" 184) only disappears when she experiences a catharsis upon seeing her long lost grandchild: "Tears replaced all the lies, and Margarita Estrella held on to the door's armrest as her body shook with violent sobs that jerked her into reality" (187). As Cobra's wife threatens to leave him if he does not address his silenced trauma, he too experiences a sort of catharsis: "Cobra lets out a wail. The howl of a wounded animal sounds from the pit of his stomach. His sobs open old wounds, pain that has never healed. Each sob brings one more stabbing accusation to the surface" (Pope Duarte 113). The expression of this pain can, at times, be rather jarring for the reader as it is often released in a violent way. For example, in the case of Penguin's mother, after she discovers her lover has been abusing her young son, she stabs him to death; her reaction is described as follows:

> Penguin's mother felt as powerful as she had felt that day in the tavern, as strong as a bull. Her feelings swept over her chaotically, rushing at her from every cell in her body. She laughed and cried, and her body shook in spasms. (Pope Duarte, "Penguin's Mother" 169–70)

Later that night, after being taken to jail, this cathartic process continues, "laughing, crying, and shaking at the same time until all the trapped, ugly feelings in her life were released" (Pope Duarte, "Penguin's Mother" 170). The expression of Penguin's Mother's pain leads to a sense of empowerment and liberation; despite being incarcerated, she is now described as free.

As a continuing theme in her body of work, Pope Duarte's focus on the soma reflects a subtle nod to the work of Chicana feminists, including Gloria Anzaldúa and Demetria Martínez, who called for the re-insertion of the corporeal element in Borderland theory and its cultural and artistic production. In the case of Anzaldúa, she introduced the concept of body writing in her later work,[71] as she stated, "It's not on paper that you create but in your innards, in the gut and out of living tissue" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 170).[72] Despite the fact that both Anzaldúa and Martínez have pointed to the cathartic capacity of body writing in the context of their own healing, it remains a relatively underexplored topic in Borderlamd and Chicanx theory. Pope Duarte's narratives underscore the role of the soma as a "locus of perception" (Shusterman, *Aesthetic* 2) in

[71] In *Speaking in Tongues*, Anzaldúa refers to the concept as "organic writing" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 170).
[72] In 1982, Anzaldúa famously critiqued other Chicana feminists who did not do so, saying: "They ignore the body. It's like they're from the neck up. Even though it's about lesbian sexuality, it's like they don't have any words. No vocabulary. They don't describe the movements of the body. I don't know of anyone who writes through the body" (*Turning Points* 63).

the artistic or creative experience, both in its production and consumption. This notion is introduced in the "About the Author" section with the following statement: "Stella Pope Duarte believes that writing, like love, begins within, or it doesn't start at all" (Pope Duarte, *Fragile Night* 265). By placing emphasis on the cultivation of the mind-body-spirit connection, the author not only utilizes the body as a frame of reference but extends it to encourage "thinking through the body" (Shusterman 2012) and *creating* from the body. Thus, I consider Pope Duarte's work to be a contemporary form of body writing. This corporeal connection is a key element in her protagonist's healing process (both individual and collective) and liberation.

At the core of this transformative healing process, we observe a strong feminine connection that develops in the barrio. Notably, nearly all of the short stories are protagonized by female characters. For example, "What La Llorona Knew" narrates the story of Elena's mother's painful past, "The Mango" features Carmelita, a frustrated school teacher looking to get a fresh start, and "Cinderella Danced" highlights Mrs. Rivera's last moments as she lays in her hospital bed. In some instances, the names of the chapters showcase their female leads: "Isabel's Judge," "Penguin's Mother," "Doña Dolores," "Black Widow," and "Lucinda María." These protagonists include women of all ages and socioeconomic statuses (on both sides of the Mexico–United States border) who are suffering as a result of pain inflicted by emotional or physical hardship, oppression, or abuse. With a handful of exceptions, this pain is brought on by the abusive men in their lives. For example, in "What La Llorona Knew" Elena's mother is beaten and called a "whore" by her father after being raped by a Sergeant (Pope Duarte 30),

Isabel, Alma, and Lydia are trapped in a cycle of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of their cheating husbands, and young Lucinda's stepfather predatory gaze "follow[s] her around the house as she dusted under dollies and shook pillows" ("Lucinda María" 208). These women are represented as trapped, oppressed within dominant patriarchal system which takes different forms. Beneath this system, the narratives transmit a stifling, suffocating atmosphere as the women are relegated to predetermined gender roles and subordinated under the charge of male family members and partners. This is perhaps best exemplified in "Mango," in which Carmelita, a middle-aged woman who lives alone in a small Mexican town, is considered "una mujer dejada" (Pope Duarte 94) when faced with the "dead end scenario of a single woman" (96), and is harassed by her neighbors who remind her that "the clock is ticking" (95) and tell her "by now prince charming is in need of his clothes washed" (95). It is important to note that this patriarchal system is propagated by both men and women on both sides of the border, and differing perspectives are expressed through the various characters. For example, in "Fragile Night," while Alma's Abuelita and curandera urge her to leave her abusive husband, her own mother pleads, "Be patient, mi hija. Look at your father. He beat me for the first fifteen years of our marriage, and now he's as meek as a lamb" (Pope Duarte 64). In doing so, Pope Duarte brings to light important nuances regarding cultural and gender norms which impact both men and women.

As an extension of this oppressive system and cycle of abuse, the female protagonists are often the center of blame for their abuse; Elena's mother recounts that her father, upon learning that she has become pregnant by her rapist, "immediately began

calling me names. Lifting me up by the hair, [. . .] called me a whore and told me that I had shamelessly given myself to a man" (Pope Duarte, "What La Llorona Knew" 25), Alma's abusive husband affirms "she needs a good beating" ("Fragile Night" 67), and Lucinda María's stepfather calls her mother "una trampa con hijos de nadie" (212) and reminds her "You'll be to blame for everything" (220) when her daughter and friend speak out against him. These examples, spanning different generations, demonstrate how this behavior has impacted the social fabric of the barrio over the decades, including family distress and the disruption of social and romantic relationships.

In response, strong female alliances develop in the barrio as a means to combat this oppression and to serve as a source of empowerment for the victims. In some cases, these alliances are formed through blood ties; for example, in "Fragile Night" Abuelita Minerva and doña Carolina —"the curandera who lived in the projects" (Pope Duarte 64)— offer Alma emotional support. It is doña Carolina who tells Alma, "es un perro [. . .] you should leave him for good, mi hija" (Pope Duarte, "Fragile Night" 64), and the spirit of her Abuelita, though now deceased, that gives Alma the strength to finally leave him:

> The whore in Alma's dreams disappeared when she admitted the truth to herself, loosened the laces on her lead shoes, and got closer to the spirit of Abuelita Minerva [. . .] so many nights of tears and gibberish come back to Abuelita's words, "You don't love Alfredo, mi hija. (68)

In other instances, these alliances are formed between close friends and neighbors. For example, in "Cinderella Danced" Virginia Rivera sits alone in her hospital

bed and reminisces about daily chats with "her old friend Erlinda, who lived next door to her" (Pope Duarte 226). Similarly, in "Penguin's Mother" a support network among female barrio residents is revealed when the protagonist calls up her friend Esperanza to babysit unexpectedly. These social support networks are an integral part of life in the barrio and are a key factor in the protagonists' empowerment and healing.

As another central theme in Pope Duarte's work, in *Fragile Night* the characters reflect a personal, somaesthetic connection to nature. This connection is presented as a critical part of life in the Borderlands, even in the urban context. In some passages, metaphors associate humans to animals; Lydia is compared to a black widow spider (Pope Duarte, "Black Widow" 203), Penguin's mother is "as strong as a bull" (169), Alfredo a dog ("Fragile Night" 64), and Marco a "dead animal" ("Penguin's Mother" 170). In other examples, nature takes on a spirt of its own; in "Pablo the Penitent" the desert landscape is personified:

> The daytime hues turned to shades of black and gray, [. . .] Already the short barrel cactus looked like so many stones thrown in heaps by a giant ogre who had tired of using them in his slingshot. The tall saguaros, arms held up towards heaven, grasped the last threads of light, then gave them up to the night. (Pope Duarte 135–6)

Pablo's connection with nature aids in his healing; the desert receives him and accompanies him in his solitude: "Pablo had run to the edge of the small town to the dump, the place where everyone sent that which was no longer of any use to anyone. And the dump received him as one of its own, broken, tattered, unable to stand except on one

leg" (Pope Duarte, "Paul the Penitent" 147). Similarly, in "The Dangerous Game" and "Once for Pepito" the landscape plays a critical role in the protagonists' healing process. In both cases, the ocean is personified, offering the characters relief; Sofia greets the ocean "like a long-lost lover she embraced over and over again, holding and caressing, making up for the time spent apart" (Pope Duarte, "The Dangerous Game" 237). When speaking with Estevan, she echoes its therapeutic qualities by saying:

> Why do you think I come to this place? I loved someone and it never brought me anything but pain. I come here and let the ocean wash all the pain out of me, and so far every time I come more of the pain is taken away. I'm feeling better all the time. (Pope Duarte, "Once for Pepito" 243)

This somaesthetic element facilitates Sofia's connection to nature and the surrounding landscape. It is only through addressing the soma in a holistic way, mind-body-spirit, that she is able to address her pain and eventually release it.

Through these tales of pain and sorrow, *Fragile Night* addresses complex topics of oppression, violence, and social and economic inequality inscribed onto the bodies of its protagonists. In doing so, Pope Duarte aligned herself with other Chicanx artistic and cultural producers who utilized the body as a trope from which issues of gender, social and economic inequality and even decolonization could be discussed. Among them, in *[Un]framing the "Bad Woman": Sor Juana, Malinche, Coyolxauhqui, and Other Rebels with a Cause* (2014) Alicia Gaspar de Alba presented a new line of Chicanx feminist theory which considered the corporeal element. In it, the female Chicana body is integral to breaking with existing patriarchal and sexist ideologies present in some interpretations

of Chicanismo. Gaspar de Alba named her theory "embodied aesthetics," describing it as follows:

> this politics of the body [is] one that frees the Chicana artist from the shackles of a relational identity as some man's wife, mother, daughter, or mistress. Instead of dispossession, ownership, or reclamation of a place outside the self, embodied aesthetics uses the body as the signifier for place. As such, the body functions as a site of origin, bridge between worlds, and locus of liberation. (117)

Consonant with Gaspar de Alba, Pope Duarte also presented an embodied Chicanx subjectivity in *Fragile Night,* in which the body serves as "a locus of liberation" (Gaspar de Alba 117) for its female protagonists who are abused, subjugated, and often oppressed. In the case of Pope Duarte, however, this embodied Chicanx subjectivity is extended to include the healing, cathartic qualities of body writing, as the protagonists' eco-somaesthetic experiences allow them to mitigate their pain and initiate their journeys to empowerment, liberation, and healing.

Faith, Community, and Collective Healing in *Let Their Spirits Dance* (2002)

Set in the vibrant El Cielito barrio, *Let Their Spirits Dance* recounts the story of one Chicanx family's turmoil following the death of their son Sergeant Jesús Antonio Ramirez (or Jesse, as they call him) in the Vietnam War. Nearly thirty years later, prompted by a divine intervention and headed by Mrs. Ramirez, the family sets off on their journey to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington in honor of their fallen

solider. Set in the late 1960s–1990s, the narrative reflects the passing of time through the use of flashbacks, time markers, and excerpts from letters sent by Jesse while at war, indicating that "everything moves in cycles and seasons [. . .] making things happen whether we want to or not" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 200). The action unfolds against a backdrop of historical events, ranging from the Spanish colonialization of the Southwest (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 200) to the Chicano Movement with the drafting of El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán in Denver in 1969 (121) and the death of Rubén Salazar in Los Angeles in 1970 (173). Within this scope, Phoenix's history is also represented: from historical figures such as Padre Kino, Senators Carl Hayden and Barry Goldwater depicted on the murals of Sky Harbor International Airport (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 34) to the founding of the Arizona chapter of the Brown Berets in the late 1960s (121).

As one of the only scholars who has featured the work of Pope Duarte, Foster called attention to *Let Their Spirits Dance* as "the first major Chicano novel —the first novel to be published by a mainline American press— to take place in downtown Phoenix and to evoke the lives of this now deeply historical district of the city" (*Glimpses* 114). In it, he identified many autobiographical elements referencing the author's personal life growing up in La Sonorita Barrio (*Glimpses* 12), including its people, places, and culture.[73] Pope Duarte herself illuminated the role of these elements in the acknowledgements, referencing her laborious research process. For example, she named Chicanx veterans and their families who offered their stories, others who accompanied

[73] As one of Phoenix's oldest existing Chicanx barrios, Foster names La Sonorita barrio, also known as the Grant Park District, "the most interesting" (*Glimpses* 107) of Phoenix's barrios.

her to the Wall, and the tour guides and tutors who assisted her and her son in their own trip to Vietnam. Through the incorporation of autobiographical elements, real historical and political events, and personal and collective memory, the narratives serve as a literary ethnography of the city of Phoenix and the United States during this period.[74]

In the first few chapters, the focus lies on the El Cielito barrio as the core of its community's social, economic and cultural networks.[75] Detailed descriptions of the urban space, including its architectural elements and spatial attributes, allow the reader to "enter" the barrio; Jimenez Elementary School (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirts* 10) where Teresa works as a second grade teacher, the Riverside Club where Ray performs in his band (6), La Casita restaurant (8), the liquor store "down the alley" (3), El Rancho Drive in (18), Golden Gate Gym (18), the All Pro Auto Parts Shop (61), and St. Anthony's Church (22). These geographic markers situate the reader distinctively in South Phoenix, bordered by the "ridge of South Mountain [. . .] purple, blue in the distance" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 156) and South of El Rio Salado River (156) and the Black Canyon Freeway (22). At times, the reader is permitted to "tour" the barrio alongside the Ramirez family, "circling around the Central Park projects, the library, the park, another Chinese store, a Southwest Market, St. Anthony's Church" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 156). The extremely detailed descriptions allow the reader to "see" what the protagonists are seeing; as they pass by St. Anthony's Church they observe "a few cars

[74] Mario T. García explores the historical element present in this narrative in his chapter "¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No! A Historical Perspective on the Chicano Antiwar Movement in Stella Pope Duarte's *Let Their Spirits Dance,*" featured in *Literature as History: Autobiography, Testimonio, and the Novel in the Chicano and Latino Experience* (2016).

[75] The chapters "Solitary Man," "Private War," "Miniature Islands," "Jimenez," "La Manda," and "Bendito" show the most emphasis on life in the barrio. In fact, as Foster has noted, "there is little direct evocation of Phoenix outside the barrio" (*Glimpses* 12).

parked along the side of the street in front of the church. Early morning mass is going on, the doors are open wide" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 156). In other instances, the barrio is personified; after many of its young men are recruited to war in Vietnam, like their families El Cielito is also left "plundered" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 56), "a hearse, black, smooth, and silent" (56).

Included in the chapters are spaces often left out in literature and film: the private, intimate spaces of the barrio. Although Pope Duarte does illustrate some of the issues faced by barrio residents, such as drug and alcohol problems, crime, and poverty, represented through Hanny's "dilapidated shack" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 66) and Consuelo's house with "broken windows," "leaky pipes," and a front yard which "looked like a cemetery of old cars, some with their hoods and doors missing" (70), they are counterbalanced with representations of cozy childhood bedrooms, rooms "lit by veladoras flickering before the image of El Santo Niño de Atocha [. . .] propped on top of a white-draped oak dresser" (10), hallways adorned with family portraits and saints on "the grooves of plaster on the walls" (13), and kitchens where teenagers "used to sneak in so quietly" (9) past their curfews. Outside, the well-cared for yards and housescapes of barrio residents are represented: "strings of lights on neighbors' front porches and the star of Bethlehem blinking" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 5–6) at Christmas, children planning "tea parties behind gnarled bougainvillea and miguelito vines" (7), and flat rooftops where "neighborhood kids stand [. . .] to watch movies all night" (18) from El Rancho Grande drive-in. Once again, a somaesthetic connection allows readers to experience the southwestern barrio, along with its many sites and smells: the "heavy,

sweet" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 148) smell of orange blossoms and the "huge yellow roses" (148) in Mrs. Ramirez's yard, Oleander bushes (14), Chinaberry trees (51) and Carob trees (119), and the fragrance of Mesquite trees along the banks of the Rio Salado (126). These portraits of both the barrio's interior and exterior spaces permit readers to "enter" the homes and neighborhoods of the protagonists and catch a glimpse of the realities they live behind closed doors.

In addition, Pope Duarte depicts the intangible aspects of barrio life, including Chicanx and Mexican culture and traditions, and its social space, outlined through intra-ethnic social networks and ties. Following the example of the Ramirez family, the text introduces holidays such as El Día de Los Tres Reyes (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 17) and El Dia de los Muertos (138), local barrio curanderos and curanderas who heal with agua de maiz and other herbal remedies (90), the Spanish lyrics of religious songs and Mexican ballads (40), and tamales (19), cocido (197), and el cochito cookies (28). As two fundamental aspects of Chicanx and Mexican culture, Pope Duarte also represents religious and family life, echoed by Mrs. Ramirez who says "what is life without la familia?" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 164).

Outside the Ramirez home, their neighbors, friends, and acquaintances represent the ethnic and cultural diversity of South Phoenix. For example, readers are introduced to the family's childhood Chicanx neighbors, Ricky and Sofia Navarro, the barrio curandero, Don Florencio, who lives on the banks of the Rio Salado (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 31), Mexican immigrants (45), Brother Mel Jakes and the African–American members of the Two Doors Gospel church, and Mr. and Mrs. Wong, the

owners of Wong's Market. Despite the emphasis on the uniqueness of the South Phoenix barrio, there is also a sense of universality that is shared across barrios in other parts of the country. For example, in the chapter, "Los Griegos," the Ramirez family visits Albuquerque and are met with Spanish street names "Don Pascual, Isleta, Emilio Lopez, Don Jacoba, and villages like Atrisco, Los Lunas, Los Padillas, Peralta" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 193) in "a neighborhood that looks like El Cielito" (193). Upon entering the home of Doña Hermina, the mother of Jesse's childhood friend and fellow serviceman, there is a sense of familiarity and homeliness expressed. Doña Hermina is described as "a duplicate of the Guadalupanas" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 197), serving them "a big pot of cocido" (197) in the kitchen surrounded by "pictures of La Virgen, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and St. Michael with his foot on the devil's neck" (197). The characters voice these similarities several times, as Teresa notes, "I pinch myself to make myself believe we're not back home" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 197).[76] Thus, the familial and cultural space of the Phoenix barrio is extended to be one shared by Chicanx residents in other cities.

In particular, as an extension of Chicanx/Mexican culture and barrio life, faith and spirituality play an enormous role in the narrative. Accordingly, detailed descriptions of sacred rituals and spaces are found throughout the text. For example, the chapter "Bendito" focuses on Chicanx/Mexican Roman Catholic practices and traditions, centered around St. Anthony's church. The actual parish, located in Phoenix's La Sonorita Barrio, has been an anchor of Phoenix's Hispanic Catholic community for much

[76] It is important to note that though Pope Duarte includes many aspects of barrio culture and daily life, she reflects its heterogeneity: not all barrio residents share the same beliefs, customs, or aesthetics.

of the twentieth century. Pope Duarte represents its exterior and interior spaces, adorned with "old-fashioned chandeliers" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 129) and "the huge, carved altar where the priest served mass" (129), surrounded by "Stained glass windows [that] sparkled with the images of St. Therese the Little Flower, St. Francis, St. Joseph, [. . .] watching over the congregation from their lofty perches" (131). Somaesthetic elements allow the reader to enter and experience this sacred barrio space; smelling the church air filled with "smoky candle wax" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 132) and feeling the heat as "the electric fan barely moved the air around us" (132), creating "beads of sweat on Manuel's mustache" (132).[77]

Led by Father Ramon and the Guadalupana sisterhood, St. Anthony's serves as the spatial location for religious and cultural events as well as community relations in the barrio. Extremely detailed descriptions —sometimes spanning several pages— portray religious customs and celebrations, such as "masses, weddings, quinceañeras" (Pope Duarte, *Let their Sprits* 129) and Easter celebrations where "men carried [the statue of La Virgen] on a platform in procession on evenings of Holy Week, marking the end of the Lenten season" (131). Often times, these celebrations are not limited to the confines of the parish walls but expand into the urban space, as in the case of the Easter processions where Teresa recounts, "around the church we went, past el barrio that looked like it was suffering as much as she was" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 131). The passage reflects a

[77] Notably, when military representatives enter the church to deliver a telegram, notifying Mrs. Ramirez of her son's death, their presence is represented as a violent disruption into this sacred barrio space (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 134).

strong sense of collective faith and community; as Teresa describes, during the processions:

> every woman wanted to suffer like [la Virgen] did [. . .] Every man wanted to suffer like Christ did, carrying the cross until his shoulder ached from the burden. Then the men carrying the cross passed it on to another man who was waiting impatiently for the privilege of feeling the pain Christ felt on his way to Calvary. (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 131)

Furthermore, the chapter includes lines from the religious hymn "Bendito" (in Spanish, also translated into English), sung by Teresa's mother. These passages serve to represent the intangible values of the barrio, such as its cultural heritage. Much like the nationalistic celebrations witnessed in California's historic barrios, by spilling into the front patio of St. Anthony's church and its nearby streets, these celebrations function as "expressive cultural practices" that are "directly, if momentarily, projected into a broader public sphere in the city, overlaying a strong collective persona upon the enforced anonymity that increasingly characterized the public identity of *la raza* in the Anglo-dominated city" (Villa 35).

Also represented in the narratives are the diverse spiritual and religious practices of the barrio. In particular, the chapters "Two Doors Gospel," "Yoloxochitl," "La Manda," and "Penitentes" reflect the Aztec mourning rituals practiced by Don Florencio (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 36), Zuñí cleansing ceremonies, and Brother Jake's Evangelical services (68). These passages serve to illuminate barrio community building processes, regardless of their respective religious beliefs. For example, Brother Jake's

revival services cure Mrs. Ramirez's migraines (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 68), Don Florencio treats Teresa's "tlazotlaliste, the sickness of attachment" (36) following the passing of her brother with a tea made from the yoloxochitl flower, and the Ramirez grandchildren participate in a Zuñí cleansing ceremony, "adorn[ing] themselves with feathers and start dancing" (281). All community members are bonded by a common faith, as voiced by Mrs. Ramirez, "faith is faith no matter what religion" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 190).

This sense of faith continues as a dominant theme throughout the narrative. Initiated by Mrs. Ramirez's manda or promise made to God, the family's journey to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial takes on a spiritual element. In several instances, the trip is compared to a religious pilgrimage; Teresa refers to her group as "the pilgrims who made it through the valleys, hills, and enchanted landscapes to come to the end of an old woman's promise" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 293), and a stranger who approaches the group says of the trip, "it's like going to church [. . .] you'll feel like praying once you get through the tears" (224). Mrs. Ramirez's faith serves as the guiding force in their long journey, and it is often reflected back onto her daughter, Teresa, as her own faith is tested.[78] Although she initially discounts her mother's beliefs, attributing them to superstition or hallucination, Teresa begins her own spiritual journey reconnecting with the religious belief systems of her cultural heritage. Together in their multicultural caravan —comprised of the Ramirez family, Gates, an African–American veteran, Willy, a Chinese–American, Fritz, a young runaway and veteran, and Yellowhair and his Zuñí

[78] On several occasions, Teresa's own faith is tested as other characters ask her to clarify, "do *you* believe all this?" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 222).

mother— their collective faith is voiced by Teresa who states, "we're pilgrims on a journey to America's wailing wall. only faith will get us there" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Sprits* 157).

The caravan serves as a microcosm for the barrio, representing its placemaking dynamics, social networks and community ties. Although Teresa refers to the "rough world of El Cielito" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 7), citing examples of tension between its Chicanx, Mexican, Anglo, African–American, and Asian residents, they are overshadowed by the positive attributes of this "complex and contradictory social space" (Villa 8). There is a sense of pride that connects residents to their South Phoenix barrio, as Teresa affirms, "Mom will never leave El Cielito" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 148). This sense of community is expressed in distinctive ways. Among the many examples, the Guadalupana women form part of a "comadrazgo, a sisterhood bound together by spiritualties to the Church and La Virgen de Guadalupe" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 88) and all carry "the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe, engraved on a gold-plated disc" (88), the local curandera Doña Carolina helps Mrs. Ramirez by offering her "yagaby leaves simmered into a tea" (68) for her migraines, and when the elderly Mrs. Ramirez is upset by her children arguing, Gates and Willy comfort her by sharing their own family problems (163). Notably, the community ties formed in the barrio are almost always intra-ethnic, reflecting "place-based interpersonal networks that make barrios such important resources –physically, culturally, and economically–for their residents" (Villa 12).

Specifically, these community ties are evidenced in the chapter "El Gato" with Jesse's farewell party before setting off to War. A distinct sense of barrio unity shines through as everyone gathers together to wish Jesse well; "all the guys from Golden Gate Gym" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 209), his Chicanx, African–American, Chinese, and Anglo friends (209) along with "a mass of relatives, primos, tias, tios, [who] crowded around Jesse, toasting beer cans for his safe return and making speeches about everything crazy they remembered about him" (209). Later, in "Pilgrims of Aztlán," a similar scene plays out as the Ramirez family prepares to depart on their journey to the Wall. Just as they had done so years ago, the barrio residents come to offer their blessings and well wishes; "Irene's kids come over to see us off. Ray comes to help the kids load up the cars" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 150), Willy loads the car with "all he could from the store" including "corn nuts, fruit roll-ups, Doritos, bean dip, and things that crackle and snap" (150), and members of the Two Doors Gospel church "show up with a tin of peach cobbler" (150). This sense of unity is extended across the nation as the family's trip brings together the voices of thousands of fallen soldiers who participated in the Vietnam War. The War is described as one *from* the barrio, as the names of its young men who left (many of them, never returning) are sprinkled throughout the text. Among the examples are Teresa's ex-husband Ray, her childhood neighbor and friend Ricky Navarro (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 148), Tortuga's nephew (23), Irene Lara's son Faustino "killed in '67" (57), as well as friends and family members of the teachers at Jimenez Elementary (81).

The story of the Ramirez family illuminates the sacrifices of hundreds of thousands of Chicanx, African–American, indigenous, and Asian soldiers who served in Vietnam. Jesse's letters provide first-hand accounts of this historically underrepresented group, "submerged by mainstream America, a submarined drifting under a sea of politics, prejudice, and racism" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 56). Furthermore, Pope Duarte expands on the social and economic factors that led many barrio youth to enlist in the War, as well as the subsequent impact on their communities.[79]

Within the familial context, Jesse's death is presented as a loss that manifests itself physically and emotionally in their private lives. The chapter "Miniature Islands" depicts the loss of family togetherness and alienation felt by the various members of the Ramirez family; Teresa and her sister Priscilla grow apart, their younger brother Paul begins to act out at school and eventually turns to crime, and the siblings fight constantly over how to care for their sick, aging mother. Following Jesse's death, there is a distinct shift in the family dynamic; as Teresa laments, "the same pictures look down at me every day from the walls at Mom's house [. . .] We were a family back then, the pictures show it" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 49). Furthermore, this pain is manifested physically in their bodies. For example, after losing her son Mrs. Ramirez's migraines return and she feels a constant pain that "travels through the center of her chest and meets her back between her shoulder blades" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 12). However, it is their

[79] Among the characters who did return to the barrio, many of the veterans struggle with mental health issues and substance abuse as a result of their experiences in Vietnam; for example, "Ricky Navarro from next door started sleeping outside on a cot almost every night" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 58), Corina Ybarra's husband dies of skin cancer that she suspects is a result of his exposure to Agent Orange (238), and Chris suffers from PTSD after having survived his friend Jesse. These examples point to some of the psychological and social impacts of War felt both in and out of the barrio.

journey to the Wall that initiates a process of collective healing, facilitating the physical and symbolic healing of the family unit. During the trip, communication between the family members improves as Teresa and her mother divulge secrets they have kept for years (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 283), and Michael becomes closer to his father, calling him "dad" for the first time in a long time. As Teresa herself affirms, "the journey has tried us, sifted out our fears, made us warriors like the men on the Wall" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 308).

Upon their arrival, this healing process extends to all those present. In the final chapter, "The Wall," the monument is described as a remnant of a national wound: "each name is a story on the Wall, each story is a cry of despair, ringing, buzzing, and sputtering pain throughout America. *War is real! War is death!*" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 165). There is a sacredness to this space, akin to a religious site, as the families pay their respects together; Teresa takes note of this, adding, "All around us are people, White, Black, Brown, Yellow, Red, every nation represented. In spite of their numbers there is silence, as if we're all in church together" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 306). As the names —and, as an extension, the bodies— of the fallen soldiers are made visible, no longer silenced by a dominating Anglo cultural hegemony, their families are finally able to address their wounds. This act of acknowledgement is one of validation, launching a personal and collective healing; as Teresa affirms:

> the Wall is reflecting our faces like a mirror. We've journeyed through Aztlán to the place where our warriors are immortalized in stone, their names, their stories hidden in atoms of granite. We've crossed paths with

them, exchanged orbits, let their Spirits dance. (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 309)

After completing their journey, the Ramirez's family tensions improve, Teresa no longer suffers nightmares about drowning in the Rio Salado River (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 284), and even Gates feels empowered, described as having "gotten stronger on the trip" (306). As part of this transformative process, Teresa comes to terms with the loss of her brother via a cathartic expression reminiscent of body writing, stating, "it's OK that I knew my brother wasn't coming home. I was supposed to. It's got me to write this book, to tell his story to the world" (Pope Duarte, *Let Their Spirits* 312).

Read as literary ethnography, *Let Their Spirits Dance* depicts the important historical and political events that impacted barrio residents across the United States over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. As a precursor to *Women Who Live in Coffee Shops and Other Stories,* a focus on the people and places of Phoenix's barrios elucidates some of the joys and grievances experienced by its residents, thus using the barrio as a "real and rhetorical locatio[n]" (Villa 15). Pope Duarte's representation of the Phoenix barrio opens up for broader discussions on politics, social justice, and urbanization, thereby aligning with the work of other Chicanx activists, cultural and artistic producers, "past and present [who have] in varying balance, interven[ed] in this intimate social space while interrogating the larger landscape of power through the political culture of their expressive works" (Villa 15).

Living in the Shadows: Phoenix Urban Space and Alternate Communities in *Women Who Live in Coffee Shops and Other Stories* (2010)

Out of all of Pope Duarte's narratives, *Women Who Live in Coffee Shops and Other Stories* provides readers with the most intimate glimpse into life in the desert metropolis through a collection of thirteen seemingly unrelated narratives linked by a single entity: Phoenix. Set entirely in Phoenix, this work situates readers in some of the city's alternate spaces —its barrios and lower-income neighborhoods— where examples of real material geopolitics and social tensions across ethnicity and class are acted out in the urban space. Among the protagonists are some of Phoenix's most marginalized residents, including drug addicts, ex-prisoners, prostitutes, single mothers living in poverty, Chinese, Italian, and Polish immigrants, Chicanxs, African– Americans, Mafiosos, a deformed veteran, undocumented Mexican cooks and gardeners referred to as *mojados* (Pope Duarte, *Women* 121), homeless people, and a transgender person. Despite being considered outcasts in the public sphere, often faced with stigmatization and discrimination, together these residents form alliances and develop alternative visions of community based in the barrio that allow for the creation of a thirdspace.

From the dedication, Pope Duarte places emphasis on Phoenix's most subjugated residents, "the invisible city dwellers of the world" (Pope Duarte *Women*), left behind or forgotten by the rest of society:

> First, a toast to all those whose lives inspired these stories, giants of their own times, Goliaths, who have now vanished from the streets of Phoenix. They lived like shadows, like clouds of vapour in the air, yet their

palpitating hearts still tell stories amidst the city's bustle and grime. (Pope Duarte *Women*)

As an extension, each narrative reflects a focus on the daily lives and struggles of these residents along with a look into their intimate spaces. The specific pinpointing of geographic locations enables a "mapping" of the city's downtown and central core in the 1980s–1990s, departing from Van Buren Street (Pope Duarte, *Women* 1, 3, 51, 103). Once considered "Phoenix's Street of Dreams" (Towne) during the first half of the twentieth century, here Van Buren Street is decorated with "dilapidated motel doors and houses set behind industrial buildings and separated by empty fields and railroad tracks" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 51) and filled with "women who walk the streets at night" (1).[80]

An abundance of Phoenix hotspots and local establishments are sprinkled throughout the text; El Paraíso dance hall (Pope Duarte, *Women* 3), the Circle K gas station (3, 61), St. Anthony's Church (23, 162), St. Matthew's Church (32), the Biltmore Hotel (47), the State Capitol Building (60), Woolworth's store (169), Central High (56, 163), Lowell School (171), Chinese South Buffet (185), the Duppa Villa Projects (88) and Central Projects (73), and Harmon Park (17, 166, 171, 173), where children play baseball beside "the old rusty merry-go-round and the bathrooms [. . .] faded walls marked up by gang graffiti" (171) and where "narcos and floozies" (173) frequent after hours. For readers familiar with the city, the names of local businesses and streets are

[80] Though there are few time markers, there is one mention of the year being 1989. For a detailed study of the evolution of the downtown Phoenix core see: Esser, Greg and Nicole Underwood. *Phoenix's Roosevelt Row.* Arcadia Publishing, 2016.

recognizable; for those who are not familiar with Phoenix, they serve as stops on a "tour" of the city seen through the eyes of the protagonists.

It is worth noting that, for the most part, the protagonists (and, as an extension, the reader) traverse the city by foot, allowing for a more clearly defined "map" of the city and more intimate connection with the urban space. For the most part, their actions represent the daily lives of its inhabitants, including children "running up and down" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 8) city streets and "zigzagging between moving cars to get to the ice cream truck" (18). Phoenix does not serve merely as a backdrop but plays an active role in the narratives as if it were the main protagonist; Van Buren Street is described as "sweat[ing] and sway[ing] with bodies, cards, and music" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 3) and Sal's diner as "tired and wrinkled, like a face that's seen too much" (44).

A documentary-like sense of realism allows readers to "experience" the urban space as the characters do. This is accentuated in part by a tangible, visceral connection between the reader and text. Examples of descriptive and sensory detail are abundant; María's father smells "like the inside of a dirty glass" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 10), Sarita's mother's sweat "smelled like earth from her plants, moisture from watering" (24), and Mr. Jenkin's law office is filled "with the smell of hardwood mixed with the dank odor of overstuffed furniture" (66–67). In addition, the sights and smells of the desert landscape permeate the text: Oldeader (Pope Duarte, *Women* 149) and Tamarisk trees (150), and "the smell of orange blossoms" (98) and eucalyptus (21). The emphasis on what the protagonists experience —what they taste, smell, touch, and feel— may also evoke an emotional or visceral reaction in the reader, adding an element of corporeality to the text.

Consonant with Shusterman's somaesthetics, here the reader participates in an "embodied experience" (*Pragmatist* 212). Much like visual art may evoke a somatic response in the spectator, this corporeal element appeals to the reader's soma. In contrast to pieces of visual art, the somaesthetic connection between reader–text is even more pronounced as it is they themselves who are responsible for creating (or recreating) their own visual imagery to accompany the text.[81] This emotional or visceral reaction in the reader allows for a deeper connection with the text, enabling them to identify with the protagonists — feel what they are feeling, smell what they are smelling, see what they are seeing— as they *traverse* Phoenix's urban space alongside them. The narratives highlight various alternate spaces in the city, from its barrios and city projects to motels "taken over by street people" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 177). As the first story in the collection, "Benny," situates readers in a barrio off of Van Buren Street, described in the following manner:

> One old warehouse looked like a wrecking ball had struck in the center of the building and had bent the frame without breaking the windows. Some storefronts had been painted so many times, cans of paint were permanently strewn in the back alley with rock-hardened brushes, waiting for the next owner who might dream up an entirely new color. (Pope Duarte 1)

In the barrio, the young María encounters a multitude of society's "outcasts" as she runs through the city streets searching for her (absentee) father; Valentina, "one of the girls who decorated Van Buren Street like ornaments dangling precariously on a

[81] Shusterman stressed the visual import of literature, stating that: "literature can be appreciated in terms of sight as well as sound" (*Thinking* 126)

Christmas tree" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 3) is described as resembling "a used-up barbie doll, her body perfect but her face old [wearing] skimpy clothes" (3). The local tire shop is frequented by "dudes who looked like they had been let out of a gangster movie" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 2) and Old Berta, one of the neighbors, has also been rejected by society. Once a famous piano player in Mexico, Old Berta stopped playing since moving to the United States "because she didn't speak English and everyone thought she was dumb" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 16).

Notably, eight out of the thirteen stories are told in first person from the perspective of barrio residents. For example, Sarita retells the tragic story of the death of one of the kids in the barrio in "Devil in the Tree," in "Women Who Live in Coffee Shops," Joanna, the daughter of a waitress, recounts the day the owner of the restaurant was arrested, and in "Spirit Women," Tonia, the "other woman," laments the loss of her lover Javier. As the characters narrate their own stories, these counterstories reveal the perspectives of people whose voices are often ignored or silenced –that of an abused child, undocumented immigrants, sex workers, people with mental illness, non-English speaking neighbors, and residents of low-income housing. All of the protagonists experience social exclusion or alienation in some way, many occupying a secondary or subordinate position in the civic context which impacts their access to, and experience in the cityspace.[82] By giving them voice, the narratives give voice to the "other." In turn,

[82] Here I employ Hilary Silver's definition: "Social exclusion precludes full participation in the normatively prescribed activities of a given society and denies access to information, resources, sociability, recognition, and identity, eroding self-respect and reducing capabilities to achieve personal goals" (iii).

this sense of agency and subjectivity in the narrative space accounts for what they lack in the urban sphere.

The characters often subvert their subordinate or subjugated positions through the formation of new community ties. For example, in "Benny" when Maria's mother expresses her displeasure for having to move the family into a low-income area following her divorce, saying "how we'll ever live in a place like this is beyond me" (Pope Duarte 4), the young protagonist affirms:

> living off Van Buren Street in sleazy apartments connected me with down-and-outers who didn't look any more dangerous than the cops who kept them in line. I was more scared of the cops because I had no one to protect me from them. (4)

In this story, a sort of neighborhood or barrio alliance is revealed; while Maria's mother (a single mother) works the late shift at the Dollar Store, the young child stays at Lisa's, who "collected a welfare check and waited for her boyfriend, Oscar, day and night" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 7), and when she is seen running alone in the street, Valentine (a prostitute) shows her concern asking "What are you doing out here so late, María?" (12). In another instance, when the child is seen walking down the street unaccompanied, as she passes her friend Santiago's apartment his mother yells out from her porch, "you better get home, María" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 13). Here this network of women acts as an unofficial neighborhood watch –although the children run freely and play in the streets, the barrio residents keep a watchful eye.

Oftentimes, these community ties interrogate or subvert traditional models, such as the family structure. For example, in the case of "One of these Days I'm Gonna Go Home," "Devil in the Tree," and "Homage," the ultimate form of community —a family— is formed between unlikely characters, each outcasts in their own way. In "One of these Days I'm Gonna Go Home," Peggy Wolf, an older woman with an "odd-shaped body" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 105) and a "fake hip with a brace stuck in it" (104) and her brother Buzzard, a war veteran who is also physically deformed after having lost his left hand in the Korean War (105), travel to Nogales, Mexico to adopt Emma, a young girl who has been deemed "not a good candidate" (113) by the owner of the orphanage.[83] Similarly, in "Devil in the Tree," the traditional family model is inverted and replaced with alternate community ties. Here, young Sarita convinces her parents to take in Inocente, a little boy who has been accused of his brother's death and is rejected by the rest of the barrio residents who believe he has a "daño" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 24) on him.

In many cases, this sense of community acts as a form of resistance to the discrimination or rejection faced by the protagonists in the urban sphere, whether social, racial, or economic. For example, in "Homage," Brenda (a Chicana clerk working at the Attorney General's Office) accepts to assist Mr. Jenkins (a Caucasian lawyer) interpret for a Mexican couple trying to recover inherited land in the city currently under probate.

[83] The owner of the orphanage tells them that Emma "was a street child, a tunnel rat [. . .] she lived in the sewers under the city, between the United States and Mexico" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 113) and that "she may have used drugs and may been used as a child prostitute" (113). Despite this, Peggy decides to adopt Emma anyway, hoping to "give her orphan– an abundant life, something she had never known" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 107).

Brenda expresses a sense of solidarity toward the couple that is rooted in a shared language and culture, telling Mr. Jenkins: "I *will* do the honors, I'm good about helping my people that way" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 65). Similarly, this bond is reflected in "Women Who Live in Coffee Shops," as Brenda appears once again, this time visiting her friend Andrea, one of the waitresses. Here, the two women are the only ones who speak Spanish in the restaurant besides the cook, Camilo (Pope Duarte, *Women* 49), and her daughter Andrea observes: "when mom and Brenda talk in Spanish, their eyes look different [. . .] everything they really wanted to say, they said in Spanish. Anything else was only pretense and routine stuff" (49). These examples hint to a bond of fellowship based on imagined alliances; although Brenda does not know the Mexican couple nor is she from Mexico herself, she refers to them as "my people" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 65). Despite being from different countries, Brenda, Andrea, and Camilo share a unique collective identity or "nationhood" based on language that transcends geographical borders.

Furthermore, these community ties serve as a source of empowerment for barrio residents. The narratives unveil existing power and social structures and tensions in Phoenix, especially between ethnic minorities and the dominant Anglo–American hegemony. There is a distinct "us" vs "them" attitude that is manifested in various ways; in "Homage" Brenda sides with the Mexican couple and convinces Mr. Jenkins to help them. When Mr. Jenkins is taken aback by her accusation that he has "bought into the system" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 70), she replies "Get a clue, Mr. Jenkins. You're on the other side of the desk. I'm not. The Confederacy's not around anymore" (70). In this

case, the power relations between the Chicanx and Anglo–American population are represented spatially; as Brenda notes, Mr. Jenkins "bought his own décor to impress the seamy side of society. Ami and I had to sit on state-issued furniture in the basement, and it wasn't nearly as glamourous or comfortable" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 67). Along with the difference in furnishings, the spatial organization of their workplace, the Attorney General's Office, is also symbolic of their respective positions in society–while Mr. Jenkins' office is on one of the upper floors, Brenda and Ami work in the basement.

Similarly, in "Bread and Water" a set of invisible borders dictate barrio residents' access to and experience in the urban space, outlining which parts are afforded to Gabriela and her Mexican working class family and those reserved for the "*gringos"* (Pope Duarte, *Women* 128). While visiting her father's workplace, a local golf course where he works in the maintenance department, Gabriela is only permitted to *view* the amenities of the clubhouse through the doorway of one of the back rooms: "a fireplace as big as their whole bathroom with a mantle trimmed in gold. Plush carpet, a rich maroon color, spread luxuriously throughout the room" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 127). Though she admits that the "armchairs and couches upholstered in satin blues and pinks looked so inviting she almost took a chance and ran in to sit on one" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 127), she quickly reconsiders as she sees "white men sitting here and there, drinking, reading the newspaper, talking" (127). Almost immediately, Gabriela returns to the back room facing "huge garbage containers, lawn mowers, hoes, shovels and other tools" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 128), returning to the space *assigned* to her and the employees. Though there is no explicit signage prohibiting her entrance to the lobby, Gabriela's access is

determined by her socioeconomic status as the daughter of Mexican, working class parents.[84] However, the discrimination they face in the city space is combated with a sense of solidarity felt within the barrio, this time shared between her parents and Raúl, "*un mojado*, [who] just arrived from Michoacán" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 121). Her parents offer him a job and a place to stay: "Raúl will stay here with us. He'll be like my son" says her father (Pope Duarte, *Women* 134).

It is important to note that this sense of community is not shared by all residents of Phoenix but rather between its marginalized residents, oftentimes irrespective of language or nationality. The alliances formed in the barrio break with traditional concepts of nationhood and citizenship to reflect a sense of belonging based on intangible values, such as personal relationships and cultural identity. In this way, they open up for new, imagined communities reminiscent of Soja's 'third cultures' or 'thirdspace'.[85] A thirdspace can be identified in *Fragile Night*, located in the interstices between 1) the physical or material space of the city, 2) its social reality, as the protagonists recount past events tied to memory and the city's social space, and 3) the imaginary, through the creation of new community ties. Located at the nexus of the material and imagined, these third spaces enable a "disordering" or "reconstitution" of existing hegemonic power structures and marginalized positioning as "the basis for a new cultural politics of

[84] Interestingly, despite having been born in the United States, Gabriela still experiences a second class citizenship presumably due to her ethnicity and/or socioeconomic status. For more on the Latinx population and second class citizenship see: Flores, William V. and Rina Benmayor. *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights.* Beacon Press, 1997.

[85] The concept of 'thirdspace' was termed by Bhabha (1994) to refer to the meeting of two different cultures. His theory highlights the dynamic, changing nature of culture. Taking from theories put forth by Bhabha and Lefebvre, I employ Soja's interpretation of thirdspace which stresses the power of these imagined communities to deconstruct positions of subjugation and colonialization set in the contemporary context.

multiplicity and strategic alliance among all who are peripheralized, marginalized, and subordinated" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 92–3). These patterns are often replicated in the physical and imagined space of a city, taking form in hierarchical or vertical power relations in the social, economic, and political sectors. Thus, by serving to deconstruct and subvert these existing structures, these new community ties act as "counterspaces" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 68), opening up to "new possibilities for radical resistance to all forms of hegemonic subordination" (92).

The creation of a thirdspace is best highlighted in the story "Women Who Live in Coffee Shops." When the owner, Sal, is arrested for suspected involvement in the "Sicilian Diamond Heist" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 57), one of the waitresses, Andrea, and the neighborhood women congregate at the diner and start to rally in his defense. Here, three different spatial dimensions can be identified in accordance with Soja: 1) first space: within the physical space of Sal's Diner, 2) second space, in the social interactions between the women and, 3) thirdspace, "spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning" (*Thirdspace* 68). The space of the diner becomes one of solidarity, community, and action; as Andrea's daughter Joanna recounts, "the coffee shop filled up with women the whole day" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 58). She continues:

> The women banded together for him. They were enraged at the system. They said it was corrupt, that everybody was on the payoff and using taxpayers' money [. . .] They remembered, they said, the early days –the

> suffrage movement, for instance– and the struggles women had to go through just to vote in America. (Pope Duarte, *Women* 59)

After several weeks, their efforts are rewarded and Sal is released. Later, he comes to visit Andrea and exclaims "You saved my life, Andrea. All your women friends wrote so many letters they drove the newspapers crazy. Judges got pissed and finally decided I had nothing to do with it" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 59). Here, this community of women serves as an alternate community that comes together against a dominating and repressive system, referenced various times via examples of police corruption and brutality. For example, Andrea shouts, "Police brutality is just your style!" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 51) and Joanna reflects, "I guess this was before the Miranda Rights, because I never heard the cop say, 'You have the right to remain silent' and all that'" (51).[86] The diner serves as a space of empowerment —"they were powerful —the women that day— all of them worried about the same thing at the same time" (Pope Duarte, *Women* 57)— and emancipation; as Soja noted: "they are not just 'other spaces' to be added on to the geographical imagination, they are also 'other than' the established ways of thinking spatially. They are meant to detonate, to deconstruct, not to be comfortable poured back into old containers" (*Thirdspace* 163).

Through constant references to geographic markers and elements of realism that appeal to the reader's senses, *Women Who Live in Coffee Shops and Other Stories* allows the reader to 'tour' and 'experience' Phoenix alongside its residents. With this, the reader

[86] The Miranda Rights became law in 1966 when the Supreme Court established the guidelines for detaining suspects. The decision was based on the case of Miranda v. Arizona – the author was surely aware of this, and thus Joanna's comment can be interpreted ironically (United States Courts).

takes an active role in assembling the fragments, 'connecting the dots' between the multiple characters and storylines. As the stories develop, a strong sense of community resonates as Phoenix's marginalized residents seek to form alternative visions of community.

Conclusion

When viewed as a whole, the literary work of Stella Pope Duarte reveals a profound connection to the social and physical realities of Phoenix barrio life, as well as an element of intertextuality that weaves together seemingly unrelated snapshots to form a cohesive, realist portrait of daily life for its residents. Throughout the narratives, recurring characters and the representation of Chicanx/Latinx values, cultural practices, and aesthetics, including both barrio housescapes and interiors, appear alongside constant references to true geographic and spatial markers. As a result, Pope Duarte gives visibility and agency to some of Phoenix's most "invisible" residents and their spaces, granting access to spaces untraversed by tourists and oftentimes even unbeknownst to other residents. Among the examples, readers enter homes with altars dedicated to deceased family members adorned with veladoras, intimate bedroom spaces and hallways filled with family photographs and religious iconography, sacred spaces where rituals and celebrations take place, and the workspaces of the working class located behind closed doors and in the backrooms of restaurants, clubhouses, and government buildings. From beginning to end, a continued emphasis on eco-somaesthetics connects barrio residents to their surroundings, be it natural or urban. This renewed focus on the body-mind-spirit,

reminiscent of indigenous holistic approaches to health and healing, is key in how the protagonists' access, experience, and live out Phoenix's urban space, as well as their own personal struggles. Pope Duarte presents a new —embodied— theoretical and artistic contribution to Chicanx feminist theory in which the protagonists initiate their own process of empowerment and liberation from their subjugated positionings, transcending physical and imagined borders to form new, alternate forms of kinship, and community.

CHAPTER 3

WALL

CHICANX MURALISM AND URBAN ART IN PHOENIX: "LUCHA SIN FIN," THE MURALISM AND ARTIVISM OF LUCINDA Y HINOJOS (LA MORENA)

I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words.

–Donald J. Trump

The now infamous words of President Donald J. Trump echoed the nativist and anti-immigrant rhetoric that had already regained popularity across the globe by the time his statement was made in 2019. Though the rise of far-right nationalism and independence movements in recent years may seem paradoxical in the context of globalization, it has reached nearly all corners of the globe. Among the most notable examples have been the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union through the "British Exit" (known as *Brexit*), Catalonia's independence referendum in October of 2017, and the words of political leaders in India, Brazil, and Israel who have publicly referred to immigrants and asylum seekers as "illegal infiltrators" (Gillan) and "termites" (Mudde). In the United States, an already precarious situation at the Mexico–United States border transformed into a humanitarian crisis after April 6, 2018 with the declaration of a "zero tolerance" policy (Amnesty International) and the subsequent

separation and detention of migrant children and their families. Today, the situation has yet to be resolved[87] and the border wall continues to be one of the main talking points among political candidates at local and federal elections in the United States.[88]

Within this broad context, the state of Arizona has occupied a central role in the debate concerning border security and immigration. In their book *Arizona Firestorm: Global Immigration Realities, National Media, and Provincial Politics* researchers Otto Santa Ana and Celeste González de Bustamante surveyed recent legislative measures that have contributed to tensions between the Mexican, Mexican–American, and Anglo population in the state, including the implementation of controversial laws Senate Bill 1070 and House Bill 2281. In addition to being met with protests, boycotts, and lawsuits at the national and international levels, in Phoenix support for its undocumented residents manifested itself in different forms both in the Valley and online through social media outlets. For example, on May 29, 2010 tens of thousands of people including former Mayor Phil Gordon gathered in what would be the second largest protest to occur in the state's history. In addition, Arizona's artistic community also played a fundamental role in the fight against the state's anti-immigrant legislation by showing its support in various ways. Among them, graffiti and murals featuring political figures like Sheriff Joe Arpaio, Hitler, and Governor Jan Brewer popped up on walls all over the city, as well as t-shirts

[87] Though the exact number is unknown, the American Civil Liberties Union reports "the government has since provided the court with data that indicates at least 2,654 immigrant children were separated from their parents or caregivers as a result of Trump administration policies" (ACLU). As of Spring 2020, thousands of children remain separated from their parents, many whose whereabouts are unknown.

[88] In an interview featured on Arizona Governor Doug Ducey's website, he maintains: "year over year it's been over a 200% increase in terms of illegal migration coming across the border" (0:23), calling for the need for "more boots on the ground at the border to stop the flow of illegal drugs and human trafficking" (0:45) (Office of the Governor Doug Ducey).

and bumper stickers featuring political messages that transformed Phoenix's urban space into a politicized one. A news article, published in April 2011, titled "A Look Back at Artwork Created in Response to Arizona Senate Bill 1070" marked the importance of the bill in the history of the city's local art scene:

> It's no secret that when SB 1070 was signed, Arizona's national reputation tanked, business suffered, and our Mexican community was subjected to unfair raids and accusations. But between then and now (and for the unforeseeable future) some artists have flourished as a result. (Lawton)

Today, more than a decade later, many of these murals have worn away or have been covered up by a layer of new paint. Nevertheless, the community's fighting spirit remains strong. In recent years, this spirit has in fact been renewed in light of talks of a border wall between the United States–Mexico and an uncertain future for its undocumented immigrants, DACA recipients, and incoming asylum seekers. In response, many local artists in Phoenix have employed their artwork as a form of activism, resistance, and solidarity with pieces that address topics of border militarization, migrant suffering, and anti-immigrant policies. The ever-expanding list traverses multiple mediums, with some of the most celebrated examples being the muralism of La Morena, El Mac, Lalo Cato, DOSE, Francisco García, and Jeff Slim, as well as the visual art of Magarita Cabrera, Raven Chacon, Chela Chelinski, Gennaro Garcia, Cha Gutiérrez, Hugo Medina, Dora Chavarria, Gloria Martínez, Julius Badoni, Julio César Morales, Nomas, and Xicana/Native American led art collective *Radio Healer.* Other distinguished examples include Carmen and Zarco Guerrero's sculptural art and masks, the theatre

productions of James E. García, and the literature and poetry of Ana Flores, Anel Arriola, and Alberto Rios.

The topic of art as activism —or *artivism*[89]— in the context of Chicanx communities in California has been explored by various researchers, including Sylvia Gorodezky, Richard Griswold del Castillo, Teresa McKenna, María Herrera-Sobek, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, and Holly Barnet Sánchez. For example, in *International Perspectives on Chicana/o Studies: This World is My Place* (2013) Herrera-Sobek retraced the history of Chicanx art from its early beginnings during the 1960s with the Chicano Movement and defined it as follows:

> A political art representing the resistance of a minority ethnic group [that has] embraced a mission to denounce the institutional violence exerted on the group and the silences of official history in order to create more inclusive ways of perception and expression. (148)

Furthermore, in her study she outlined a fundamental principle known as "aesthetic activism" that is visible in much of Chicanx art, defining it as:

> an ideological political position held by artists in all areas of artistic expression who use what people consider aesthetically beautiful techniques, that is, the arts, such as film, literature, visual art, photography, theater, and so forth, in pursuit of social justice. (Herrera-Sobek 154)

[89] The term "artivism" (a combination of "art" and "activism") was defined in 1997 in a meeting between Chicanx artists from East Los Angeles and Zapatistas from Chi-apas, Mexico. For more information see: Latorre, Guisela, and Chela Sandoval. "Chicana/o Artivism: Judy Baca's Digital Work with Youth of Color." in *Learning Race and Ethnicity: Youth and Digital Media.* Ed. Anna Everett, 2008. pp. 81–108.

Despite the fact that Chicanx art and artivism has been discussed extensively in the context of California and other states such as New Mexico or Texas, Phoenix's Chicanx artistic and cultural production has been widely ignored by scholarly research. Accordingly, in this chapter I wish to draw attention to Chicanx urban artist Lucinda Y Hinojos (known as "La Morena") and her muralism in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area and beyond.

Entirely self-taught, La Morena has been a key player in the Phoenix art scene since 2015 and is quickly gaining popularity around the country and beyond due to her incredible talent as a muralist and commitment to social justice issues. Reflecting on the current political and social climate in Arizona, La Morena's muralism presents a dialectic between art and society interjected into the urban space of the Borderlands and beyond. By focusing on women of color, Dreamers, and the undocumented as her subjects, her work highlights the voices and bodies of those who are often silenced or ignored by mainstream society. Through an act of barriology her artwork allows for the definition of a space (both physical and imaginary) that seeks to empower the Chicanx/Latinx population through Latinx placemaking and community building, and the promotion of a pan-ethnic, feminist perspective. Taking a strong stance on immigration and equal rights, her artwork seeks to promote awareness and inspire action, raising questions regarding the topic of citizenship, identity, and belonging.

The history of Chicanx muralism as a street art reveals an intimate connection with the notion of urban space. In his book *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture*, Raúl Homero Villa theorized the relationship between

Chicanx/Latinx communities and the urban space, defining his concepts of barrioization/barriology. Much like the Chicanx/Latinx barrio residents in California featured in his study, Phoenix barrio residents have also utilized acts of barriology to express their space/place-specific cultural identity and combat threats of discrimination and deterritorialization. For our purposes, we have identified many of the same factors — among them, social, economic, and political— that have led to the formation, development, and in some cases, displacement, of Chicanx communities in Phoenix. Over the course of its history, many of Phoenix's original Mexican and Chicanx barrios, including its historic Mexican core, have been destroyed. Recent urban revitalization efforts continue to ignore its Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity and instead promote a luxury, cosmopolitan, and culturally neutral desert lifestyle. Within this context, La Morena's muralism —as artwork produced *by* and *for* members of Phoenix's Chicanx/Latinx community— serves as a physical and symbolic act of cultural resistance and barriology; as Villa affirms: "representation is a material social force" (4).

As an artist, and more specifically, an urban artist, La Morena breaks with all stereotypes.[90] She is a woman of color (fourth generation Chicana/Native American) and a single mother of three who until recently worked full-time in a corporate position at Bank of America.[91] This diversity manifests in her artwork through the subjects and themes she addresses: mainly faces of women of color, undocumented children, the

[90] Regarding the topic of street art and gender see: Pabón, Jessica N. "Ways of Being Seen: Gender and the Writing on the Wall." In *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art.* Routledge, 2016. pp. 78–91.
[91] "My full name is Lucinda Yrene Hinojos. I'm 35 years old, mother of 3, and raised here in Phoenix, Arizona. My whole family is here, I come from a community that goes back four generations; I'm Mexican/American and Native Apache from the White Mountains. However, I identify as a Chicana artist" (Hinojos).

homeless, and migrant workers– all members of marginalized groups within Phoenix's (and as an extension, American) hegemonic culture. Throughout her body of work, there is a discernible corporeal connection between La Morena and her muralism. As a survivor of domestic violence herself, she has been very open about the role art has played in her own healing process by empowering her to work through her trauma. Now as an artist, she continues the process by presenting her work in hopes it will provide inspiration and individual and collective healing for her community and beyond.

Early Work

"Colobrí" (Phoenix, 2015)

Since the beginning of her career in 2015, La Morena has embraced a strong commitment to social justice issues including immigration and human rights, utilizing her artivism as a way to connect the art world with community activism. As her first major mural project, in July of 2015 La Morena collaborated on the "Colobrí" ("Hummingbird") Immigration Mural Project along with various artists, including well-known local muralists Lalo Cota, Jeff Slim, Chip Thomas (known as "Jetsonorama"), Navajo artist Julius Badoni, Justseeds artists Thea Ghar (Oregon), and Chinese–Canadian artist Jess X. Chen (known as "Jess X. Snow") (see Fig 4.1). Conceptualized by muralist Karlito Espinosa (known as "Mata Ruda"), the project was organized by the Colibrí

Center for Human Rights in Tucson, a group that helps to help prevent migrant deaths at the Mexico–United States border.[92]

Fig. 4.1. Photograph of *Colobri* (2015). The is mural dedicated to missing and deceased migrants. It features the image of a mother holding a photograph of her smiling daughter, surrounded by two hummingbirds at her side. 24 June, 2020. Author's personal collection.

Spanning the entirety of a 100 foot concrete wall on the southeastern wall of the Melgosa building on Grand Avenue,[93] the central image features the figure of a woman holding a photograph of a smiling young girl. Framing the central image, on either side of her are two large hummingbirds: to the left, one painted in bright shades of blue and green, and to the right another in its skeletal form painted in red and black. Surrounding the central images are figures of stars, butterflies, and flowers. Several of the artists who collaborated on the mural have explained the meaning behind the various motifs; for

[92] The artist marks this moment as pivotal in her career and personal life, saying: "this was my awakening. I had 3 kids, I had never paid attention to what was really going on. And, that moment changed my life, I was politically awoken, culturally awoken and knew this was something I wanted to do" (Hinojos).
[93] The exact address of the mural is 1023 Grand Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona.

example, the photograph of the young girl is an actual photograph pulled from the Colibrí Center's missing migrant database (Hwang).[94] Painted on the woman's blouse, the desertscape features GPS points representing the spots where migrant remains have been found (Hwang). As we can only see the bottom half of the woman holding the photograph's face (notably not her eyes, one of the features that makes someone unique and easily recognizable), we are reminded of both the invisibility of undocumented migrants in life and in death as well as the universality of a mother's love, a human connection that traverses all geographic, cultural, and ethnic borders. As for the hummingbirds, the animal holds significance in both Aztec and Mayan cultures; as Mata Ruda has described:

> [they are] an indigenous symbol for safe passing. They soar as messengers between life and death, and their hundreds of species have been found migrating across the US/Mexico border for thousands of years similarly to how thousands of humans have migrated. (The Action Network)[95]

Similarly, the butterflies also represent migration and freedom. Other artists have alluded to the symbolism behind other features in the piece, including the flowers (signifying mourning for the victims) and stars (representing those who have passed while making the journey) (Trimble).

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[94] In an interview, Chelsea Halstead of the Colibrí Center pointed to the relevance of the mother figure, saying: "it's the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters who are the caretakers of the information, and reporting and gathering documentation about their missing loves ones. They're the ones shuffling through the impossible bureaucracy" (Hwang).

[95] In Aztec culture the hummingbird was a symbol of rebirth. If one died in battle they would be reincarnated as one of the tiny birds. For more information on its symbolism in different cultures see: Pigott, Charles. *Writing the Land, Writing Humanity: The Maya Literary Renaissance.* Routledge, 2020.

As for its location, the story behind how and why the mural came to find its home on Grand Avenue is indicative of the struggle many artists face when choosing to deal with sensitive issues such as immigration and human rights. According to Mata Ruda, his initial plan was for the mural to be completed in New York, but he faced difficulty finding a location there due to its controversial nature. The artists began their work on July 14, 2015 after having secured a wall in Phoenix at a building at First and Washington Street. They completed two hummingbirds along with the words "Migrant Lives Matter" before they were asked to stop by the building owner (Hwang).[96] Finally, thanks to the Colobri Center, they were able to find a new location at the La Melgosa building, a collective artspace in Phoenix's Grand Avenue arts district (Hwang). Beatrice Moore, the owner of its new home, expressed her solidarity with the artists' mission in the following statement to AZ Central:

> Immigrant desert deaths, as well as basic human rights for all, have been a concern of mine for quite some time, so I was happy to be able to support artists with the courage to speak visually on this subject. I think the image is very moving.. and will provide a strong statement and symbolic visual insight into the human tragedy, family loss, and personal sadness surrounding the subject. (Hwang)

Similarly, the organizers as well as the artists themselves have been very vocal about the power of the mural's message; as Phoenix muralist Lalo Cota stated: "these

[96] The mural was to be completed in time for the Netroots Nation conference on July 16–19, 2015 at the Phoenix Convention Center (a short distance away), but following an anti-Joe Arpaio march from the Phoenix Convention Center to the Fourth Avenue Jail on July 17, the artists were asked to stop by building management.

issues are happening in our backyard, and a lot of people are not aware of it. The mural belongs here in Phoenix" (Hwang). By making a statement regarding migrant rights in such a public way in the largest urban center in the southwestern United States, notably only a short distance from its downtown core which houses the Phoenix Convention Center and Government District (home to Phoenix's Immigration Court), the mural sends a bold message. "Colibrí" inserts a political message into the public urban space, represented in visual form through this image of a mother and daughter. Chelsea Halstead, program manager for the Colibrí Center, commented on the mural in the following statement:

> Through arts and storytelling, we are able to communicate a crisis in a way that touches people's hearts through different mediums. We can tell people statistics all day long, tell them that the bodies are piling up and talk about what a crisis it is, but when you put a human face to it, it makes a deeper impact. (Hwang)

Upon its completion, the mural received attention from local newspapers and media outlets, including Fox 10 News, Telemundo, and PBS. After having seen Fox 10's coverage, La Morena responded via a post on her Instagram page in which she reaffirmed her mission in the following caption:

> I'm still in aww and [*sic*] how amazing this project is coming together. My mission is to advocate, educate, and inspire through my work and murals. I have been receiving so much love and support from my family and my community…but this is not about me and my work, it's about how we can

> come together, support each other, and advocate through art! Today was another day with the press and a message was said loud and clear! We want a Clean Dream Act! And La Comunidad is going to stand together strong and South Phoenix/RAZA I give you props for showing up "Brown and Proud" Today. (lamorena_art "You can hear my son jumping up and down")

La Morena utilized the digital platform to offer her viewers a glimpse into her personal thoughts during the reception process, an intimate and extremely important part of the mural making process which is usually not shared with the public. Since the advent of the Internet and the rise of social media, many artists have taken advantage of various digital platforms to showcase their work to a broader audience. However, as opposed to merely sharing her work on her artist website —which normally facilitates only linear or one-way communication— La Morena relies on her social media platforms (mostly, Instagram and Facebook) to complement and provoke dialogue between her work and the viewer. She supplements her visual content with long, detailed captions that offer insight into her personal reflections while aiding in her mission for community engagement, empowerment, and unity. By doing so, La Morena participates in a complex community-building process that utilizes both first space (through the physicality of her muralism) and second space (through the creation of global community of followers/viewers who engage with her muralism either in person or digitally). The end result is the creation of a new thirdspace a la Soja that combines and transcends the real and imaginary.

"Colors of la comunidad" Mural Project (Various Locations, 2018+)

"Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom" (South Phoenix, 2018)

As an integral part of her brand and personal identity, La Morena constantly highlights her close connection to Phoenix. Specifically, the artist has emphasized an intimate tie to South Phoenix in both her muralism as well as her online presence (see Fig. 4.2) as both sides of her family are from the area (Santistevan).

Fig. 4.2. *I Can Never Give You That Sexy Face*. The caption points to a strong connection between the artist and South Phoenix as part of her identity. Courtesy of La Morena.

Her mural "Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom" (see Fig. 4.3) underscores her connection to the South Phoenix community by addressing one of the issues that impacts it. The mural was La Morena's first solo project in Phoenix and the first installment in what would become her "Colors of la comunidad" mural project.[97] As the

[97] The artist founded the mural project in April of 2018. She now leads it together with project manager (and fellow artist) Diana Calderon. The project is described as "a project that advocates change through

material expression of Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity, it was a community mural from its inception. Located on the East facing wall of a building directly facing Central Avenue, the mural was completed with the help of five (female) fifth-grade students from Maxine O. Bush Elementary School under the supervision of their teacher, Vanessa Chavez. Also fundamental to the piece were collaborations with Petra Falcon, founder of Promise Arizona, and Sam Gomez from Sagrado Galleria, two important Chicanx/Latinx institutions operating in the South Phoenix area.[98]

Fig. 4.3. Photograph of *Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom*. Its bright colors break with the surrounding industrial and commercial edifices and demand the attention of the viewer, including those who walk or drive down Central Avenue. 24 June, 2020. Author's personal collection.

In her book *If These Walls Could Talk: Community Muralism and the Beauty of Justice* (2012), researcher Maureen H. O'Connell analyzed the role of community muralism in urban neighborhoods and called attention to the art form as "the most

art. Our mission is to empower, motivate and inspire our communities. Through murals, we can educate and unify us. Our goal is to partner with organizations that work toward making our communities better and are dedicated to enforcing change" (Phoenix Urban Guide).

[98] Promise Arizona is an organization dedicated to the education and empowerment of its local Latinx community; as part of its mission, leader Petra Falcon states: "we believe that building immigrant and Latino political power is key to bringing hope, dignity, and progress to our communities" (PAZ Promise Arizona). The Sagrado Galleria, also located in South Phoenix, seeks to empower its local Latinx community through artistic and cultural production.

democratic form of public art since they are both commissioned by communities and exhibited in their public spaces" (51).[99] In her study, O'Connell also highlighted the work of Latinx and African–American urban artists in their aim to create "a space that integrates devotional practice with an attention to the needs of the neighborhood" (57). Accordingly, "Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom" can be considered a community mural as it signifies a participatory/collaborative action at various levels, from the planning phase to its completion and reception.

Furthermore, its location on Central Avenue in the heart of the South Phoenix community is significant.[100] As one of its longest streets, the Central Avenue Corridor traverses the entirety of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, connecting South Phoenix —a predominantly minority community and historically economically disadvantaged area— with the more affluent (and in most cases, predominantly Anglo) parts of the city to the North. In an interview with a local media outlet, La Morena described the community's reaction by saying, "when I was painting, people were driving by cheering, honking, coming to the wall and talking to me, bringing their daughters. It makes me proud. It's the best feeling ever" (Dowd). By choosing to the complete the mural in such a visible spot along one of the area's most heavily trafficked streets, the piece not only serves as a materialization of barrio "resistive tactics or defensive mechanisms" (Villa 5) but also evokes a necessarily active participation on behalf of the viewer. Its bright colors —

[99] In her study, O'Connell outlines the difference between community murals and commissioned street art by saying, "community murals are quite different from public art that is commissioned by civic authorities or private individuals and completed by artists with little, if any, connection to the exhibition space. Community murals use the "vernacular" of a particular culture or event in a particular neighborhood as their muse and the "vernacular space" in communities as their galley" (51).

[100] The exact address of the mural is 3812 S. Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona.

fuchsia, purple, and yellow— demand attention from the passerby, even for a minute, thus transforming a former practically invisible space (indistinguishable among commercial and industrial buildings in the area) into one that represents the barrio.

The mural seeks to activate and empower the South Phoenix community both through its imagery and message; a message that is concretized in words in the following poem:

> We don't know each other
>
> But we need each other
>
> We are Different
>
> But we are all one spirit being
>
> You…
>
> Carry the key to your potential
>
> Together…
>
> We all carry the key to our freedom.

The poem is an expression of solidarity and support for DREAMers, some possibly students of the elementary school that collaborated on the mural. In it, the artist articulates a facet of the barrio's cultural identity as well as its concerns. As an act that comes *from* the barrio and is *for* the barrio, the mural denotes a form of barriology; aligning with what Villa described as:

> the expressive practices of barrio social and cultural reproduction —from the mundane exercises of daily-round and leisure activities to the formal articulation of community defensive goals in organizational forums and

> discursive media— reveal multiple possibilities for re-creating and re-imaging dominant urban *space* as community-enabling *place*. (6)

Similarly, Brian Conway examined murals as an expression of collective identity in the context of Northern Ireland and the murals dedicated to the events of Bloody Sunday:

> It is not enough for collectives to have an identity; it is also necessary for them to express it. Announcing one's identity at regular intervals via symbols, myths, and practices serves to reinforce and strengthen in-group attachment and out-group differentiation. (10)

Thus, as an expression of cultural identity, La Morena's mural represents and unites the Chicanx/Latinx community in a message of hope; as the artist herself commented: "This mural is just to bring motivation, inspiration, and hope that everything is going to be okay" (Dowd). Its message, decorated with the image of a young female DREAMer opening up a birdcage and releasing two doves and some monarch butterflies into the air, transforms into a cultural symbol representing peace and freedom (Dowd).

"Humanity Over Hate" (Phoenix, 2019)

As the second installment of the "Colors of la Comunidad" mural project founded by the artist herself, the mural "Humanity Over Hate" (see Fig. 4.4) serves as a material testament to a particularly dark period in recent United States immigration policy history. On April 6, 2018 Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a "zero-tolerance policy for criminal illegal entry" which resulted in a record number of children and their families

being separated and detained at the Mexico–United States border. Already at the forefront of the country's immigration and border wall debate, this new legislation brought even more attention to its southwestern border and consequently, the state of Arizona. The actions on behalf of the United States government provoked an outcry from international organizations such as Amnesty International who called it "nothing short of torture."[101] Thousands of protestors, activists, and volunteers from all over the country congregated at detention centers, offering their support and assisting with interpreting and legal services and donations.

On the local level, the legislation was also met with enormous outrage as community members, activists, and organizations alike —including schools, religious institutions, and local community groups— banded together to offer their services and support.[102] As in the aftermath of SB1070 almost a decade earlier, Phoenix's art scene also became mobilized as many artists and cultural producers expressed their opposition to the legislation and support of migrants and asylum seekers through their artwork. During this time La Morena announced she would be completing six murals in different cities throughout Arizona as part of her "Colors of la Comunidad" mural project.[103] As one of the murals included in the series, "Humanity Over Hate" depicts the face of a

[101] In a statement, Director of Amnesty International Americas Erika Guevara-Rosas announced: "this is a spectacularly cruel policy, where frightened children are being ripped from their parent's arms and taken to overflowing detention centers, which are effectively cages. This is nothing short of torture. The severe mental suffering that officials have intentionally inflicted on these families for coercive purposes, means that these acts meet the definitions of torture under both US and international law" (Amnesty International).
[102] As with SB1070, many local organizations came together to offer shelter and donations for asylum-seeking families. Among them were several religious institutions including Pastora Magdalena Schwartz's Capellanía Cristiana and The International Rescue Committee (Phoenix).
[103] The six murals will be painted in different cities around Arizona including Phoenix and Tucson. Collaborations will include Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA) and Aliento, a youth and undocumented-led organization.

young female child surrounded by flowers painted in purple, yellow, and white. The child's expression, seemingly distraught or saddened, demands the viewer's attention. Below is an image of the entrance gates of a detention center (notably, with its doors open) across a desert landscape. The words "END familia SEPARATION" are printed in white above. Close to the gate, the figure of a child with their back turned to the viewer walks amongst purple flowerbeds while monarch butterflies fly through the open gates. Framing the central image are two small hummingbirds painted in turquoise, blue, and purple. The mural is painted primarily in jewel tones, emblematic of the artist's color theory, with a greyish blue background. The iconography and color tone echo the solemnity of the mural's message; the powerful image humanizes a critical issue which continues to impact tens of thousands of people through the face of a child, perhaps its most vulnerable population.

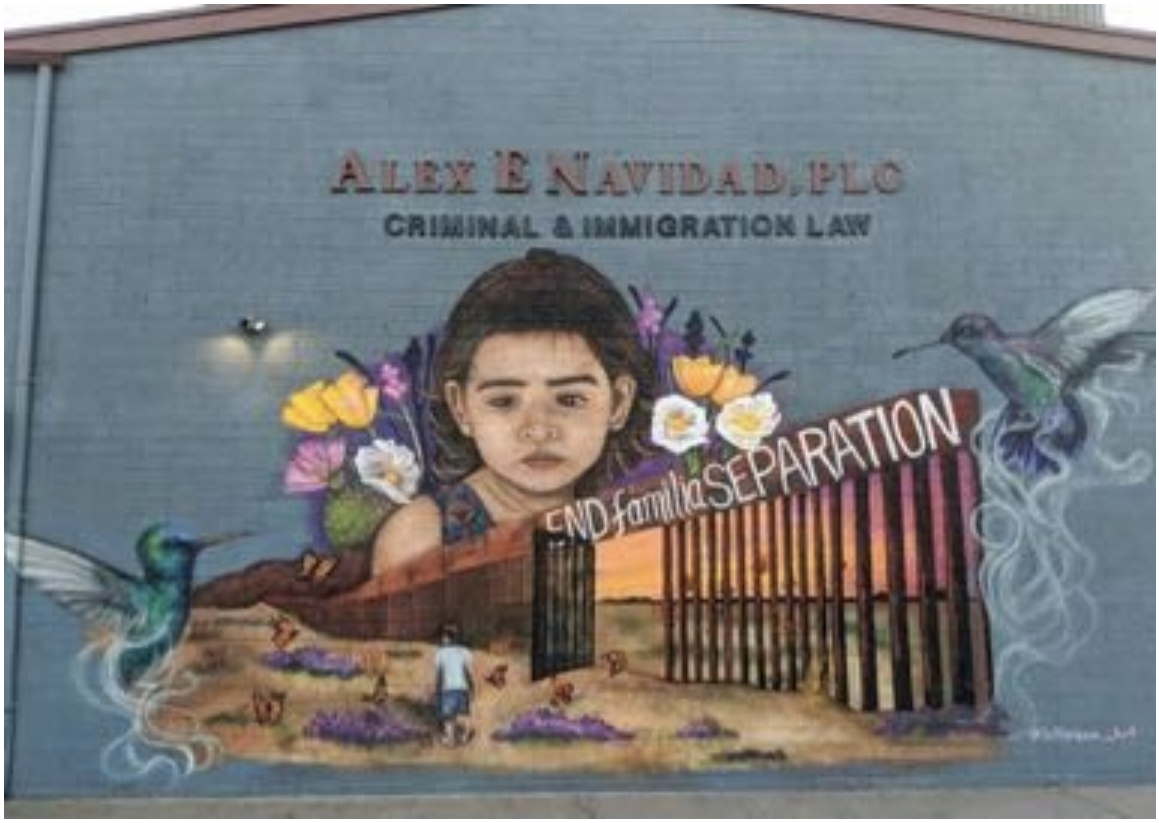

Fig. 4.4. *Humanity Over Hate*. The mural is located on the Alex E. Navidad Criminal and Immigration Law Office. The main image features the face of a young child above the gates of a detention center with the words "END familia SEPARATION." Courtesy of La Morena.

As for the symbolism behind the motifs featured in the mural, the artist has explained that the butterflies, here shown flying through the metal gates, "symbolize children being set free, and the hummingbird are the guards" (TeleSURTV). Monarch butterflies and hummingbirds are popular motifs seen throughout La Morena's body of work and are particularly fundamental to this series since both are migratory creatures, here depicted as flying freely, symbolizing freedom.

Inspired in part by the artist's own experience visiting the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales where she met with migrants and heard their stories, she became even more

determined to use her art as a means of education and advocacy. In an interview with TeleSUR English, La Morena called for action:

> we have to put pressure on lawmakers and senators to get those kids out of there. Some of those minors are dying at the hands of ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) [. . .] These people being held in detention centers are not illegal aliens - seeking asylum is not against the law. They're humans like we are but are being given inhumane treatment" (TeleSURTV).[104]

Furthermore, its location on the Alex E. Navidad criminal and immigration attorney office draws attention to the mural's political message.[105] Covering the entire East facing wall of the building, it visible from both West Washington Street and Cudahy Way as well as visitors to the parking lot located directly in front of the wall. Consequently, the image is the first to greet potential and current clients and staff of the law firm as well as passer-bys who can easily view it from the street. The building is situated in the Government Mall neighborhood; located west of the downtown core, the area is home to city and county government complexes including the Office of the Attorney General Civil Division (located in the same complex), the Arizona Capitol Museum, as well as the Arizona State Courts Building and the Arizona Supreme Court only a block away. By interjecting this striking image along with its clear message

[104] Project Manager Diana Calderon commented, "we created this kind of support so they don't feel alone, to show them we are united as a community, and so they feel protected against tragedy, because art also heals" (TeleSURTV).

[105] The exact location of the mural is 1401 W Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. In 2020 Navidad was appointed city of Phoenix municipal judge and announced that as of April 1, 2020 he would be closing his practice. The fate of the mural is unknown.

against family separation into the public sphere, the mural acts as a spatial intervention in an already politicized area of Phoenix's urban space.

Despite being the most recent installment in La Morena's "Colors of la Comunidad" series, the mural did not receive as much coverage or recognition from local media outlets as "Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom." However, it did receive considerable attention on an international level and was featured in several Spanish-language newspapers including *Hoy Los Angeles*, *El Mercurio* (Chile), *El Comercio Peruviano* (Peru), and *El Siglo Coahuila* (Mexico). Through these publications, coupled with its diffusion on social media, "Humanity Over Hate" played an important role in establishing Phoenix as a central point in the international debate surrounding family separation and child detention by quite literally, putting a face on it.

Other Murals in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area

"Mother Earth" (Phoenix, 2017)

Located a short distance away from the "Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom" mural along the same street, "Mother Earth" (see Fig. 4.5) adorns the interior wall of Azukar Café's outdoor patio.[106] The piece, commissioned by owners Sandra and Norberto Flores in 2017, comprises three sections of the wall that marks the perimeter of the patio. One of its main images, located on the center wall, features an indigenous woman looking outwards towards several nature motifs, including the ocean, mountains, desert botanicals, and hummingbirds painted in vivid jewel tones. The spatial

[106] The exact address of the mural is 7246 South Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona.

configuration of the mural dictates the spectator–artwork relationship; located below street level, the interior of the enclosure wall faces the outdoor seating area. Thus, if one is seated at one of the outdoor picnic tables, one is confronted with the piece, coming face-to-face with the indigenous woman almost at eye-level.

Fig. 4.5. Detail, photograph of *Mother Earth*. The mural adorns the interior wall of Azukar Café's outdoor patio. 24 June, 2020. Author's personal collection.

The café is run out of a converted historic home along Central Avenue and is owned and operated by Sandra and Norberto, both born and raised in South Phoenix. As the children of Mexican immigrants and first-time business owners, the space reflects hybrid Mexican–American influences in both its menu (with words like "Cafecito," "cultura" and ingredients such as cajeta and piloncillo) and its aesthetic, as images of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) calaveras and the Virgen de Guadalupe decorate the fireplace and walls alongside succulents and stylized furniture. In addition to its function

as a café, the locale also serves as an important community space, often hosting local pop-up markets and other events. Thus, while the mural helps to delimitate the physical space of the café by adorning the interior of the patio enclosure walls, it also plays an important role in defining a cultural or social space.

Situated below street level, the mural helps to define this cultural enclave which celebrates Chicanx/Latinx cultural heritage in South Phoenix. Its imagery can be interpreted as an expression of the cultural identity of Azukar Café's owners and, undoubtedly, many of its patrons. The murals "Unlocking Your Potential and Freedom" and "Mother Earth," both located in South Phoenix, work together in conjunction with other elements of the area's cultural and linguistic landscape to reflect the identity and needs of many of its local residents. Among them, one finds public and commercial signage in Spanish, as well as Mexican restaurants, check-cashing establishments, tortillerías, yerberías and other businesses and locales many times owned, frequented by, or dedicated to providing services to members of Phoenix's Chicanx/Latinx communities. Just as the Chicanx residents of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and San Diego have used artistic and cultural production to re-purpose or re-imagine the urban landscape, residents of South Phoenix have also expressed "alternative needs and interests from those of the dominant public sphere" (Villa 7). These murals work together alongside other expressions of Chicanx/Latinx identity to "reveal multiple possibilities for re-creating and re-imaging dominant urban *space* as community-enabling *place*" (Villa 7), reflecting a unique character that differentiates this area from other parts of the city.

"No More Stolen Sisters" (Phoenix, 2019)

In May of 2019, La Morena completed a mural dedicated to the thousands of missing and murdered indigenous women and children in Arizona and beyond. Located in the Evans-Churchill neighborhood, adjacent to the downtown core and not far from the city's well-known Roosevelt Row, "No More Stolen Sisters" (see Fig. 4.6) was completed as part of the 1½ Street project.[107] The mural adorns a brick wall alongside the work of several other local street artists including Tato Caraveo. Its central image depicts the profile of a young indigenous woman whom the artist has identified as 15 year old BellaRose,[108] dressed in traditional clothing with a black bandana tied across her forehead and a red hand painted over her mouth.[109] To the right of her, the words "NO MORE Stolen Sisters #MMIW" are written in red paint.

[107] The project, launched in May of 2019, celebrated the work of talented urban artists in Phoenix. It focused on the Evans-Churchill neighborhood and was presented by FTG Projects, Isaac Caruso, and the Phoenix Center for the Arts.
[108] The artist has identified the model as "beautiful 15 year old BellaRose who is O'odham, Pima, Dine, Hopi, and Chicana" (Lamorena_art "Today is National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women").
[109] The red hand became a powerful symbol used in women's rights marches and protests all over the world including International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Fig. 4.6. Photograph of *No More Stolen Sisters*. The mural features the profile of a young indigenous woman outfitted in traditional clothing with a red hand painted over her mouth. To the right of her, the words "NO MORE Stolen Sisters #MMIW" are written in red paint. 24 June, 2020. Author's personal collection.

The piece's iconography and message draw attention to a pertinent issue that has heavily impacted the indigenous population in Arizona and beyond.[110] In a recent report

[110] Unfortunately this issue extends all over North America. In 2019, Canada launched a National inquiry into its Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

published in November 2018, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) identified more than five hundred cases of missing or murdered indigenous women and children in the United States. In particular, UIHI listed the state of Arizona as having the third-highest number of cases of missing and murdered indigenous women at over fifty as of 2018, with 31 cases in Tucson alone.[111] These disturbing findings shed light on broader issues that continue to impact contemporary indigenous communities, especially in urban areas, including but not limited to: domestic violence, sexual assault, police brutality, and lack of safety for sex workers (Urban Indian Health Institute 6). The UIHI called attention to the underrepresentation of these cases in law enforcement records as well as local, regional, and national media outlets,[112] attributing it to "a deeply flawed institutional system rooted in colonial relationships that marginalize and disenfranchise people of color and remains complicit in violence targeting American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls" (Urban Indian Health Institute 3).[113]

[111] The Urban Indian Health Institute is a division of the Seattle Indian Health Board. Out of the 506 cases the UIHI identified over 71 US urban areas, 128 were missing person cases, 280 were murder cases, and 98 had an unknown status (Urban Indian Health Institute 6). The study found 54 cases between 1943 and 2018 in Arizona alone. Tucson ranked at number four of the top 10 cities with the highest number of MMIWG cases at 31 (10).

[112] "UIHI examined 934 articles, which collectively covered 129 cases out of the 506 represented in the study. One quarter of the total number of cases were covered by local, regional, or national media" (Urban Indian Health Institute 18).

[113] According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, murder stands as the third-leading killer of American Indian and Alaska Native women, with rates up to ten times higher than national averages (Bachman et al. 1).

In addition to the mural's content and form, its physical location is also significant. Located in a narrow alleyway directly behind the Churchill,[114] one of the area's newest dining and entertainment complexes, it is visible to restaurant patrons and employees. Furthermore, the alleyway is well frequented by attendees (mostly passerbys on foot) of Phoenix's First Fridays, described as "one of the nation's largest, self-guided art walks" (Roosevelt Row). The mural's strong political message stands out amidst the surrounding murals, most of them decorative, and confronts the viewer upon entering the alleyway. By inserting such a poignant message regarding missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, a topic often ignored in mainstream media and news coverage, into this trendy neighborhood just shy of the downtown core and only steps from one of the area's more popular entertainment spots, "No More Stolen Sisters" serves as a spatial intervention.

In describing her inspiration for this project, the artist alluded to a spiritual connection. La Morena shared the story via an Instagram post with the following caption:

> I first learned about #MMIW from a beautiful Art Piece done by Cannupahanska. I had no idea about the issue. Nor did I know that AZ has the 3rd highest percentage of #MMIW in the Country!! That night I saw the image in my head and photographed 15 year old BellaRose. Then I learned that awareness day was May 5th I about lost it. Everything came together and now the mural is serving its purpose and more. (Lamorena_art "When I originally put a mock up together")

[114] The exact address of the mural is 901 North First Street, Phoenix, Arizona.

In her statement, the artist appealed to a transnational collective identity and unity, guided by a feminist perspective and spiritual connection; as she herself stated: "I called upon my spirit guides and ancestors to assist me with this wall, to have the message spread as much as possible. To provide healing, hope, peace and compassion. Share and spread the awareness. Prayers up" (Lamorena_art "Today is National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women"). The reception of the mural further emphasized this sense of collective identity and solidarity; upon its completion, a healing circle was held at the site on Sunday, May 12 (notably, Mother's Day in the United States) in which local indigenous and Chicanx leaders, healers, art and culture producers, activists, and community members attended. Among them, Vicktoria Gypsy Luna (curandera and owner of Elements of Spirit spiritual shop[115]) blessed the wall through an indigenous cleansing ritual in a candle-lit ceremony. La Morena shared photos from the ceremony on her Instagram page and included the caption: "It's a beautiful powerful movement when indigenous women unite" (Lamorena_art "It's a beautiful powerful moment").

As a survivor of domestic abuse herself, the artist presented the piece as a source of unity and healing for all. In her dedication, she expressed a sense of solidarity and unity between indigenous women as well as female survivors of gender-based violence across the globe by stating: "This mural is for me, my mom, my sister and the thousands of Indigenous Women victims and survivors world wide" (Lamorena_art "When I originally put a mock up together"). By posting this message of solidarity via her online

[115] She describes herself as "Traditional, Spiritual, Curandera, Bruja, Witch" (elemntsofspirit).

platform, the artist addresses a community that extends the physical limits of Phoenix. In fusing the physical space (firstspace) with its digital presence (secondspace), the site transforms into a space of "resistance in the Postmetropolis, not just as figures of speech but also as concrete sites for progressive action" (Soja, *Postmetropolis* 282).

Moreover, the mural also serves as a space for collective healing. On the topic, Delgado (2003) explored the impact of memorial murals as a way to process and mitigate community trauma in the urban setting, stating: "Memorial murals [. . .] take on a tremendous significance that transcends art. Art, in this instance, serves the community and advances the central priorities of a community" (76). However, unlike the murals Delgado examined, which were created by and for residents *within* the confines of a specific community, here La Morena brings her message into a more public sphere. As previously discussed, the artist utilizes her digital platform (and social media in particular) as an extension or, at the very least, a complement to her body of work. La Morena shared several pictures documenting the production and reception process via her Instagram and Facebook profiles. The response was incredible; within only days of her post, the photographs reached 50,000 views on Instagram (Lamorena_art "This mural reached 50k within just a few days"). In addition, she was featured in an article in French feminist magazine *Femmes ici et ailleurs* as well as an article published in Swiss French-language newspaper *Le Temps*, titled "Des Amérindiennes á moto pour dénoncer les violences" ("American Indians get on their Motorcycles to Denounce Violence," translation is my own).

On the local level, the mural also had a large impact. In June 2019 the artist was contacted by former Phoenix mayor and State Representative and Congressman Greg Stanton who requested to meet with her and featured "No More Stolen Sisters" on his Twitter page (@gregstantonaz). Later that year, on August 13, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey signed House Bill 2570 in which a 21-member study committee was commissioned to investigate the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Arizona. As part of this bill, the committee members (all representatives from tribal, local and statewide organizations) were to compile information regarding the cases and submit a report to the Governor by November 1, 2020. In it, they were asked to outline possible/existing risk factors that impacted indigenous women in Arizona, as well as potential legislative measures that could help prevent further cases.[116]

La Morena continues to create murals in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area and beyond, aligning herself with the work of Chicanx art and culture producers who have used their work as an act of auto-representation and resistance. Guided by her desire to reflect a transnational sense of solidarity and unity, informed by Chicanx feminist praxis and a spiritual connection, her work deconstructs traditional binaries of us/them, insider/outsider, and local/global. Thus, her muralism in Phoenix underscores some of the complexities of Latinx placemaking in the context of globalization.

[116] Stipulations of the bill included the following: "3. Review policies and practices that impact violence against indigenous women and girls, such as child welfare policies and practices 4. Prosecutorial trends and practices relating to crimes of gender violence against indigenous people. [. . .] 6. Determine the number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in this state. [. . .] 8. Propose measures to ensure access to culturally appropriate victim services for indigenous women and girls who have been victims of violence 9. Propose legislation to address issues identified by the study committee" (House Bill 2570).

Mural Work Outside of Phoenix

"Lucha sin fin" ("An Endless Struggle") (Coachella Valley, 2016)

Many of the same motifs and themes that La Morena addresses in her muralism in Phoenix are repeated throughout her body of work in other parts of the United States. In the following sections, I will examine her murals "Lucha sin fin" (see Fig. 4.7), "Limpia por la comunidad," and "Was That Day the Conquest? Independence?" located in Coachella Valley, California, Rochester, New York, and Yuma, Arizona respectively. "Lucha sin fin" was completed in 2016 in collaboration with artist Mata Ruda[117] as part of the Coachella Walls Walking Tour initiative. The piece offers a message of awareness and resistance, dedicated to "honoring the Latina women farmworkers who over the years have endured innumerable struggles from sexual abuse to pesticides, racism to unfair compensation" ("Coachella Walls").

[117] The Coachella Walls project, launched in April 2014, was organized by Coachella-based artist Armando Lema and curator Medvin Sobio. Its mission is to provide "arts driven community revitalization in Downtown Coachella's Historic Pueblo Viejo District" (TAGR).

Fig. 4.7. *Lucha Sin Fin* ("An Endless Struggle," my translation) (2016). Collaboration with Mata Ruda. Coachella Valley, California. The mural depicts the (partially obscured) face of a female migrant farm worker and the image of a hummingbird, a motif often used by the artist to represent migration and freedom. Courtesy of La Morena.

The mural depicts the face of a female farm worker, with an agricultural landscape and the words "LUCHA SIN FIN" painted in white on her torso. To the right of the central image, is a small hummingbird painted in various shades of grey and white. It is important to note that the woman's face is partially covered (only the bottom half is shown); perhaps a symbol of the invisibility of this sector of the population. Despite the fact that migrant farmworkers make up a sizeable portion of the local population of Coachella Valley and are a vital part of the region's agricultural sector, often times their needs are ignored and their working conditions and rights poorly protected.[118] The mural is located directly in front of Veteran's Memorial Park, a heavily trafficked area and the site of cultural events such as festivals and community

[118] Within this sector, women are particularly at risk. The National Farm Worker Ministry has noted that "females in the fields are often the least desired, lowest-paying jobs, are the first to be laid off, receive fewer opportunities to advance, and face a culture of discrimination and machismo in workplace."

celebrations, and therefore can be easily viewed by park-goers or passer-bys.[119] By re-inserting the presence (and concerns) of a particularly invisible segment of the population normally relegated to fields on the outskirts of town, into such a public area of the urban space, the mural acts as a spatial intervention.

Through the material representation of this underrepresented sector of the local Chicanx/Latinx community, the murals function as "intentionally disruptive way(s) of (re)interpreting the relation between the colonizer and the colonized, the center and the periphery, Firstworlds and Thirdworlds" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 126). By representing the faces and needs of marginalized members of society and interjecting them into the public sphere, La Morena gives them voice and agency.

"Limpia por la comunidad" (Rochester New York, 2017)

Roughly one year after completing "Lucha sin fin," La Morena was selected among eleven other street artists from across the country to participate in the 2017 Wall Therapy mural festival in Rochester, New York. The annual festival, founded by Dr. Ian Wilson (Medical Director of Rochester Endovascular) and lead by Erich Lehman began in 2012, and is described as "an art and community intervention project, using public murals as a means to transform the urban landscape, inspire, and build community" (Wall Therapy). In 2017, the theme of the festival was "art and activism" and all muralists

[119] The exact address of the mural is 1560 Sixth Street, Coachella, California.

featured —referred to as “therapists” (Wall Therapy)— shared a common objective of including political content in their work.[120]

La Morena’s installment, titled “Limpia por la comunidad” (see Fig 4.8), was her largest solo mural project, covering the entirety of a brick wall measuring 85 feet by 12 feet tall. Its central image features the profile of a young girl (who the artist has identified as her young daughter, Gisele) performing an indigenous shamanic cleansing ritual, as she smudges the air holding a bundle of dried sage. Flying towards her is the image of a white owl. Behind her back, there is a large sage leaf plant painted in a vibrant green. The composition of the mural is anchored in the arrangement of three images of the moon, each in a different phase: on the far left, in first quarter, a large full moon directly behind the girl, and a crescent moon on the far right. Along the bottom of the mural, a bright border painted in red and yellow stands out against the purple background, serving as a homage to the artist’s cultural heritage (Rafferty). Its color scheme reflects a combination of bright jewel tones including purple, turquoise, and yellow, typical of the artist’s work.

[120] The mural festival focused on artists who were dedicated to the “representation of voices that were being stifled in the modern political atmosphere.”Topics included the #blacklivesmatter movement and gender inequality (Wall Therapy).

Fig. 4.8. Detail, *Limpia por la comunidad* (2017). The mural depicts the artist's daughter participating in a shamanic cleansing ritual called "smudging." Courtesy of La Morena.

In an interview with the *Rochester City Newspaper*, the artist explained that the images represent healing, motherhood, and spirituality:

> At first I wanted it to be a little bit political, because I do a little of both [. . .] But I thought I'd go from the heart on this one and be a little more spiritual. Because it doesn't matter what culture you're from, or what race you belong to, we all need a little healing in our lives. (Rafferty)

Traditionally, smudging is used by Native American cultures as a means to dispel negative spirits and attract positive ones. Here, the artist has chosen the figure of a woman —more specifically, a young girl— to perform this cleansing, sending a message of healing for the Earth. In the same interview, she described the significance of the owl in relation to her own lived experience:

> As for the owl, La Morena explains the animal has a special personal significance to her: To me it's a good omen, I see owls as messengers. Since I was a kid as young as my daughter, I started seeing white owls. A

> couple of weeks ago my daughter and I were out driving, and there was a white owl that was flying with us long enough that I woke her up to see it. She's at the same age that I was when I saw my first owl outside of my grandmother's house. (Rafferty)

By choosing to depict this owl alongside her own daughter, the piece reflects an undeniable personal element, described by La Morena as "Pasado. Presente. Futuro" (Past. Present. Future).

Located on the eastern wall of a building in the GP4H neighborhood, the bright colored mural stands out amongst its surroundings, including nearby commercial and industrial complexes as well as residential homes.[121] Only a five minute drive from the Rochester Public Market, one of the area's main cultural destinations, GP4H can be defined as a mixed-use neighborhood. As Rafferty has noted, although the mural does not face a main street, its location directly behind a vacant grass-covered lot allows for an unobstructed view for pedestrians and passerbys, including customers of nearby businesses as well as local residents. According to Rafferty, "it's a great spot to put a thing of beauty and positivity." The mural brought a new social dimension to a formerly invisible/unused space as community members gathered to help paint, converse with the artist, or simply watch. During the completion process, the artist received help from Wall Therapy volunteers as well as members of the community, including some young children who wanted to participate.[122] In addition, La Morena described having women

[121] The exact address of the mural is 1112 East Main Street, Rochester, New York.
[122] In addition to WALL\THERAPY volunteers, Yrene was assisted by her mentee, 19-year-old Hector Castellanos from Casa Grande, Arizona.

from the neighborhood approach her to thank her for including topics of spirituality and motherhood in her piece (Rafferty). Today, "Limpia por la comunidad" continues to serve as a new point of interest and interaction, now as a potential meeting point for both locals and tourists who come to the neighborhood to view and photograph the mural. In doing so, La Morena's work has transformed an empty brick wall behind a vacant lot into a community *place*.

"Was That Day the Conquest? Independence?" (Yuma, Arizona, 2018)

Strategically located a short drive from the Mexico–United States border, "Was That Day the Conquest? Independence?" (see Fig. 4.9) revives the history of the land through a reference to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo by which the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado were ceded to the United States. Completed in conjunction with street artists Mata Ruda and Gaia, the title of the mural questions the "Official" version of history surrounding the events of the Mexican–American War (1846–1848).

Fig. 4.9. “Was That Day the Conquest? Independence?.” Collaboration with Mata Ruda and Gaia in Yuma, Arizona. Project organized by Claudia Foret. The mural features the torso of a man outfitted in military uniform and a comet streaking across it. Courtesy of La Morena.

Its iconography features the torso of a male figure outfitted in a military uniform painted in bold colors with a comet streaking across the right side. Much like the Chicanx muralists of the 1970s in California, the artists utilized bright shades of red, orange, and yellow with black. La Morena described the piece via the following caption on her Instagram:

> A jade comet streaks across a portrait of Santa Anna with the medallion associated with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo exchange copy. The Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement between the United States and the Republic of Mexico established the division between the two nations in 1848, thus concluding the Mexican American War. As a result, Mexico ceded roughly half of its territory earned after gaining its independence from Spain, the genocidal march of Manifest Destiny was set in motion. (Lamorena_art “My face is burnt”)

The artists have indicated that the military figure represents Mexican president Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna who signed the controversial Treaty of Guadalupe–Hidalgo. In doing so, the mural honors the Hispanic history of the present-day American Southwest, while pointing to the long-standing presence of its Mexican–American/Chicanx population. In the same post, La Morena appealed to a sense of community that is not confined by national borders:

> The jade comet, a metaphor from Octavio Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude*, transgresses humanity's unnatural boundaries and political turmoil alike. It represents an ardent search, as Paz wrote, 'a flight and return, an effort to re-establish the bonds that unite us with the universe'. (Lamorena_art "My face is burnt")

By bringing this history into the public space and interrogating it, the artists reflects a pedagogical intent characteristic of the Chicano Art Movement. As researcher Marc Simon Rodriguez has explained, the artists of the Chicano Art Movement were heavily influenced by Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, and sought to raise awareness and educate the public through their art:

> By breaking down the barriers between high culture and working-class life the Mexican muralists challenged artists to reflect their Politics in their work, and produce art that spoke not only to other artists, collectors, and critics but also to everyday people as well as those committed to social, even revolutionary, change. (141)

Located in an industrial area of Yuma, Arizona, "Was That Day the Conquest? Independence?" spans the entire Western wall of All Secure Self Storage.[123] The mural is truly a spectacle amidst the empty walls of the surrounding storage containers; its enormous dimensions and bold colors break with the tones of the desert landscape and sky and occupy a sizeable portion of visual space. By drawing —or, rather, demanding— the viewer's attention, the mural transforms this non-place[124] set among storage containers into a Chicanx/Latinx space. In an interview with a local newspaper, one of the artists who goes by the name Gaia elaborated on the power of muralism to transform public space, stating, "the mural becomes a site of celebration of identity and resistance against homogeneity. The mural can act as a thorn or a backdrop, depending on which issue the artist, the organizers and the community wish to confront" (Herzog). In the case of "Was That Day the Conquest? Independence?," its title and content interrogate "Official" renderings of history while provoking dialogue, if not interaction, with the history of the Mexican–American/Chicanx population in the United States.

Conclusion

When viewed as a whole, La Morena's muralism in the Southwestern United States and beyond can be approached from the perspective of Chicanx art. In the past, critics such as José Gámez, Carlos Francisco Jackson, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, and Holly Bernet Sánchez have studied Chicanx cultural and artistic production extensively as a

[123] The exact address of the mural is 7505 E. 32nd St, Yuma, Arizona.
[124] The term "non-place" was introduced by Marc Augé to refer to places of Supermodernity (including bus stops, train stations, and airports) "which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (63).

reflection of cultural identity, community placemaking, and resistance. Muralism has played a particularly important role in the history of Chicanx art since its early beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s. On the topic, *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* (1993) by Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet Sánchez as well as *Give Me Life: Iconography and Identity in East LA Murals* (2016) by Barnet Sánchez and Tim Drescher stand out as two of the most in-depth studies encompassing the work of early Chicanx muralists in California. In their study, Bernet Sánchez and Drescher (2016) described the significance of muralism in East Los Angeles as a source of community pride:

> the murals celebrate communities working to create a sense of pride in the barrios, in their Mestizo heritage, and in traditions that are culturally Mexican and working class at their core. This sense of community pride and ethnic identification gave meaning to being Chicano, to creating a new identity. (4)

In doing so, the murals represent and reaffirm the cultural identity of barrio residents:

> East Los mural iconography sought to create a visual field within which the murals' local viewers could identify themselves as Chicano/a and thus highlight the dialectic between dominant and subordinate, mass culture and local Chicano culture, individual and society. (Bernet Sánchez and Drescher, *Give Me Life* 6)

In the contemporary context, La Morena's muralism in Phoenix and beyond also acts as a form of affirmation of Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity as well as an expression of "nondominant cultural traditions and its resistance to systematic oppression" (Bernet Sánchez and Drescher, *Give Me Life* 6). The artist aligns with the aims of the Chicano Art Movement through her emphasis on ethnic pride and self-determination. However, unlike much of early Chicanx art, her work does not reflect a nostalgic or romanticized vision of the past but one that represents (and seeks to empower) the contemporary Chicanx/Latinx population. I maintain that La Morena's artistic work is even more inclusive; as she herself has stated, "We are one spirit being and we need to support each other no matter what color we are" (Arballo). In her entry in *Encyclopedia of Latino Culture: From Calaveras to Quinceañeras* (2014), researcher Maria Gaztambide explored the "post-Chicano" art movement beginning in the 1980s, and noted that "artists have become increasingly critical of entrenched definitions of ethnicity to embrace a more culturally and politically complex view of the world, one centered not on the collective experience of all Chicanos but instead on the individual" (229). Gaztambide referred to works by Carlos Almaraz (1941–1989), Luis Jiménez (1940–2006), and John Valadez (1951–) as examples of this new aesthetic, revealing "firm links to postmodernism in their reactions against sharp classifications, essentialized (reduced to simplistic characteristics) identities, and the supposed objectivity of reality" (229).

Although La Morena does share common ground with artists of the "post-Chicano" movement in her mission and work, specifically in the rejection of ideals of cultural nationalism and the essentialization of Chicanx identity, her body of work breaks

all barriers. By focusing on a spiritual connection informed by her Chicanx/indigenous heritage and feminist praxis, La Morena offers a unique perspective. The artist elaborated on her artistic vision in an interview with online publication Iamapotropaic.com as follows:

> I still work full time, I do art full time and it can be really exhausting, and my spiritual practice keeps me sane. So many women are talking about this, the body, and external experiences, but they aren't talking about what they are naturally here for, what we have within us. Women have strong intuitions, we carry that with us, we are mothers, we nurture. (Hinojos)

La Morena embraces her role as daughter, sister, and mother and uses it as a source of empowerment in her artistic practice; as she explained:

> Male artists tend to think as a loner artist, they seem to sacrifice family, love, significant other, whereas female artists won't do that! I won't sacrifice any of it; you can do it all! I've preached that, if I can do it, you can do it. I can still have a relationship; I can still have family, and do art. I get my inspiration from all of these things, my kids, being a mother, my spirituality. (Hinojos)

Her artistic vision outlines a unique form of Chicanx feminism closely tied to Shusterman's theory of somaesthetics.[125] Much like Gloria Anzaldúa and Demetria Martínez have utilized their body writing as a means to process and express their

[125] Shusterman's somaesthetics "treats the body not only as an *object* of aesthetic value and creation but also as a crucial sensory *medium* for enhancing our dealings with all other aesthetic objects and also with matters not standardly aesthetic" (308).

Borderland identities, La Morena also relies on a holistic mind-body-spirit totality that informs her artwork. In doing so, these Chicanx feminists challenge traditional dichotomies that have been established by colonial and patriarchal systems, and instead embrace more comprehensive (and indigenous) ones. In her book *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative* (2011), Theresa Delgadillo explored the role of "body writing" in Anzaldúa's "spiritual mestizaje" as a means of liberation:

> Writing becomes both an intensely physical, bodily process of decolonization and an examination of the imprint of ideologies and religions on the physical self. It is perhaps the intensity of this discovery, of the way that our physical presence in the world, our very bodies, are shaped by oppressive discursive paradigms that creates the rupture that leads Anzaldúa, and others following in her path, into the Coatlicue state. (7–8)

By placing importance on the mind-body-spirit connection as an essential component of her artistic production, La Morena emphasizes the corporeal dimension of the artistic experience for both creator and viewer. She has pointed to the transformative power of art in its ability to heal, describing it as follows:

> I'm learning to be a curandera, a natural healer. I'm learning both from my Native American roots and Mexican roots and mixing it [. . .] This is where the spirituality in my work is coming from. I get a little scared to talk about it, because people don't understand and don't want to hear

> about it. But the energy around it is amazing! The capabilities I have and what I can do, I mean, I can do natural healing with my hands, I want to carry that into my work, the real healing is in the artwork. (Hinojos)

The artist appeals to this spiritual connection that unites all humans as a source of empowerment and healing in her community. In an interview with *Phoenix New Times*, she described her source of inspiration, saying "it's not about me, it's about the community. I'm doing this for the community. We are going to keep fighting because these are our neighbors, our friends, our family members" (Zuniga). The significance of her contribution to Phoenix's social and physical landscape can be contextualized in relation to its long history of underrepresenting or silencing its minority voices, whether intentionally or not. Her muralism injects images of women and children of color painted in vibrant jewel tones into the public space of a city that relies on its reputation as "an overwhelmingly Anglo place" (Arreola and Oberle 171). By displaying the cultural identity and concerns of the Chicanx/Latinx community, her artwork serves as the material expression of "subaltern tactics of sociospatial resistance" (Villa 17). In his book *Rethinking the Chicano Movement* (2014), researcher Marc Simón Rodríguez examined the relationship between Chicanx muralism, representation, and placemaking:

> Artists in the *barrios* of California, Texas, and across the Mexican American diaspora sought to reshape the visual environment of their neighborhoods to unify people through images that created a shared cultural imaginary and placed the local community within the heroic narrative of Chicano history. (139)

La Morena's body of work is a testament to the efforts of Chicanx/Latinx creatives all over the United States that utilized their artistic production to "secure and preserve the integrity of their cultural place-identity within and against the often hostile space regulation of dominant urbanism" (Villa 5). Her muralism in Arizona and beyond helps to unite her community and delimitate a Chicanx/Latinx space that is both physical and imaginary. Located in the physical space of the city (first space), the murals incorporate references to Chicanx/Latinx social and cultural symbols (second space), resulting in the creation of a thirdspace that includes the voices and faces of the "Other." As outlined by Soja, this thirdspace is both "real-and-imagined [. . .] a practiced space of intervention against all forms of oppression" (*Thirdspace* 65). Thus, it becomes a place for inclusivity and openness particularly for the marginalized and subjugated:

> Allowing the "subaltern" to speak, to assert an-Other voice, pushes the discourse on to a different plane and into a recreative space of radical openness where both development and social justice can be re-envisioned together, along with their histories and geographies, not as an either/or choice but in the limitless expansion of the both/and also an invitation to continuous deconstruction and reconstitution, to a constant effort to move beyond the established limits of our understanding of the world. (Soja, *Thirdspace* 126)

In an action of Chicanx/Latinx community building and placemaking, the murals open up for new spaces that are meant to be "directly lived" and experienced by its "users" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 67). Through her muralism, La Morena allows those who are invisible or

have been silenced in the traditional physical or social space of the city to experience representation and a renewed sense of community. The iconography and messages work in unison to break with the nativist, anti-immigrant rhetoric that has dominated much of the political and social sphere in Arizona and the United States in recent years, reflecting a Chicanx feminist praxis based on a spiritual connection that transcends all physical, social, and economic barriers to unite all human beings.

CHAPTER 4

MIXED MEDIA

CHICANX MIXED MEDIA ART IN PHOENIX:

BLUE TONES, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TAMALE WRAPPERS: THE WORK OF ANNIE LOPEZ

Early artists of the Chicano Art Movement sought to educate, unite, and empower the Mexican–American population through their work. Encompassing diverse media from visual art, muralism, photography, literature and poetry, to creative performance, part of their mission as "cultural workers" (Fregoso 30) was to represent Mexican–American/Chicanx cultural heritage and experience in lieu of producing "art for art's sake" (Maciel et al. xviii). In 1995, the Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation (CARA) art exhibit held at the University of California provided the following definition of "Chicano Art":

> Chicano art is the modern, ongoing expression of the long-term cultural, economic, and political struggle of the Mexicano people within the United States. It is an affirmation of the complex identity and vitality of the Chicano People. Chicano art arises from and is shaped by our experiences in the Americas. (qtd. in Griswold del Castillo, Mckenna and Yabro-Bejarano et al. 27)

While the scope of Chicanx Art has since evolved and expanded to include more diverse forms as well as ethnic, cultural, gender, and sexual identities, it continues to play

a central role in the social and political history of the United States. In his study titled "A Historical Overview/Update on the State of Chicano Art," George Vargas highlighted the historical capacity of Chicanx art by stating:

> It chronicles the evolution of Chicano consciousness in a people who have had to survive as second-class citizens, outsiders living inside a rapidly changing American society. It interprets the life story of real Mexicans and Chicanos who, having lost land, language, and culture as consequences of the conquest, the U.S.–Mexican War, and the Mexican Revolution, nevertheless prevailed in American society. Chicano art portrays a people's cultural history within the context of a new American history. (Maciel et al. 195)

Vargas' contribution reaffirms the connection between material culture and history. As such, the significance of Chicanx art can be interpreted as the material embodiment of the struggle of minority artists, including Mexican–American, African–American, Asian American, and Native American creatives among others, for equal representation and validation within mainstream art and cultural institutions in the United States. Since its inception, Chicanx art has reflected an intimate yet often problematic relationship with the mainstream art scene and its spaces. Researchers and art critics, including Jennifer A. González, Shifra Goldman, and C. Ondine Chavoya, have commented on this contentious topic; Chavoya noted that since its early manifestations, "Chicano art was largely defined in relationship to institutionalization,"[126] either "outside

[126] Chavoya defined "institutionalization" as "the moment of entrance into museum and market"(González et al. 415). For more on the complex relationship between Chicanx art and museum spaces see: Gaspar de

of (or in opposition to) the museum" (González et al. 415). Similarly, in her discussion on Chicanx artistic survival and consumption, acclaimed art historian Shifra Goldman articulated this dualistic relationship as follows:

> The Chicano art movement, both as a result of its exclusion from mainline art institutions (it *did* knock violently on the doors to be accepted on its own terms), and by attempting to bypass the alienating aspect of art as a consumer product within a consumer society, sought diffusion for its art through an alternative community-based cultural structure: *centros, talleres,* storefront galleries, small presses, street murals, and so on. (González et al. 50)

Goldman's account highlights the spatial nature of this relationship, as segregation and marginalization patterns were reproduced in the social and physical exclusion of these artists from mainstream art spaces.

Within this broad historical context, for the better part of the twentieth century Chicanx/Latinx art and culture producers in Arizona have also struggled for intellectual and physical representation within its mainstream artistic spaces and institutions. In its capital city of Phoenix, their underrepresentation and exclusion from spaces of "high art" has perpetuated the general disregard for the contributions of its minority communities vis-à-vis an Anglo cultural hegemony. In response, Chicanx/Latinx creatives in Phoenix have mirrored the actions of Chicanx artists in other parts of the United States who challenged this exclusion through community-led grassroots alliances, organizations, and

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Alba, Alicia. *Chicano Art: Inside–Outside the Master's House. Cultural Politics and the Cara Exhibition.* University of Texas Press, 1998.

art spaces. Examples include: El Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado (M.A.R.S.) (1978–2002), el Museo Chicano (1990–2009), and Xico (est. in 1975 as Xicanindio Artes).

Notably, opportunities for female Chicanx/Latinx creatives in Phoenix have been particularly limited in comparison to their male counterparts; echoing national and international patterns, the city's art scene has been historically Anglo–Saxon and male dominated. This disparity continues into the present; in 2018 an interview with *The Phoenix Times*, Rachel Zebro, curatorial associate of modern and contemporary art for the Phoenix Art Museum, affirmed that only three to five percent of art in major collections are by female artists, and that the number is even less for women of color (Trimble).[127] This pattern has been mirrored in the (little) coverage dedicated to Chicanx/Latinx art and culture producers in the city, with the majority focused on the work of male literary authors, visual artists and muralists, theatre producers, and performers. Perhaps very tellingly, only two females were included among the eight Arizona Chicanx artists featured in the "Chicano State of Mind" art exhibition, held at the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum from 2015–2016.[128] The lack of female representation at such a monumental exhibition (the last of its kind to be held at one of the city's mainstream arts institutions) is an indicator that this issue continues into the present.

[127] This trend is of course not particular to Phoenix. In 2019 researchers Topaz et al. explored the topic of diversity in art museums in the United States. Their pioneering study was the first large-scale study to analyze artist diversity in museums across the country, including eighteen major art museums and over ten thousand individual artist records. According to their findings, 85% of the artists considered in their study were white, and 87% were men (Topaz et al.).

[128] The "Chicano State of Mind" exhibition featured the work of Marco Albarran, Jose Benavides, Kathy Cano-Murillo, Lalo Cota, Jon Garza, Such Styles, Teresa Villegas, and Frank Ybarra. This exhibition coincided with Cheech Marin's "Take Ten: The Past Decade of Collecting" which was also on view at the Mesa Arts Center in January of 2016.

Yet, despite this lack of visibility, female Chicanx/Latinx creatives have been an integral part of the development and subsequent transformation of Phoenix's art scene, both community-based and mainstream. In this chapter I will focus on work of Annie Lopez, a mixed media artist and photographer with an impressive body of work spanning over three decades. As an enduring presence within the Phoenix art scene since the early 1980s, Lopez has been (and continues to be) a formative influence in the city's downtown core, an area now known as a creative arts district. To illuminate the breadth and importance of her work, I will present examples from several of her major collections, including her early work as part of El Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado (M.A.R.S.) as well as her "Hispanic Series Collection" (1980s–present day), "The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" (2007), and her cyanotype dress series (2012–present day).

Born in 1958, Lopez is a fourth-generation Phoenician who continues to reside and work in the city, now from her home studio. Recognized mostly for her work with cyanotype photography, Lopez uses her art as a medium to explore both her own identity and lived experiences as a Chicanx/Latinx woman in the Southwestern United States as well as her family's history as long-time residents of Arizona. Her artwork conjoins elements of personal and collective memory through the use of family and vintage photographs, childhood memories, and remnants of life growing up in Phoenix; as she herself has affirmed:

> My work is based on my personal experiences and family history. I am a native of Phoenix, Arizona and my work reflects the culture of this region

> [. . .] Series of work that I have created, such as the Hispanic Series, The Only Spanish I Know and The Story of My Infernal Life, reflect the absurd stereotypes and biases I have encountered, or bad experiences I have survived. ("Art Guides" 3)

Her vast body of work combines different photographic methods with a range of artistic medias, including text, paper, fabric, and in her most recent pieces, tamale wrapper paper stitched together to form three dimensional dresses. Some of the main themes she addresses are Hispanic history and cultural identity as well as intra- and intercommunity stereotypes, racism, and sexism. Many of her pieces exhibit a strong somaesthetic element, as has utilized her artistic production as a means to process her own emotional trauma, including the loss of her first born child and her father's Alzheimer's disease.

Over the course of her career, Lopez's preferred medium has been photography. She has described her first experiences with the camera at the young age of thirteen as a way to document and explore her own family history:

> Learning about my ancestors has been my mission since I was a child. I once found a photograph in a family album. The person in the photograph looked like me, but it was actually my grandmother who died nearly 30 years before I was born. My quest for family history has taken me to cemeteries, libraries, state archives and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. I often include my own history, especially the

> embarrassing experiences that most people would rather forget. ("Family Matters" 5)

Much like the memories and histories that she salvages, Lopez's use of cyanotype photography also pays homage to a lost art form. Invented by Sir John Herschel in 1842,[129] cyanotype was commonly to photograph botanicals until World War I when it was replaced by more convenient, automatic methods. Since then, it has been reserved to the fields of architecture and engineering, commonly referred to as "blue print" (Burns and Wilson 13). Lopez became familiar with cyanotype after taking an alternative photography class at Phoenix College in 1985 (deborahross36) and has since adopted it as her main medium. As a contact photographic printing method, cyanotype utilizes two main chemicals (ammonium iron citrate and potassium ferricyanide) that produce a reaction when exposed to ultra-violet light. The artist's own method reveals a strong eco-somaesthetic connection as she utilizes the natural elements of her environment —in this case, the desert sun— to develop the images ("Art Guides" 3).

Early Work with El Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado (M.A.R.S.) (1978–2002)

The formation of Phoenix artist cooperative El Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado (M.A.R.S) marked a pivotal period both in Annie Lopez's artistic career as well as the history of the city's Chicanx/Latinx creative community and art scene. Founded in 1978, artists Jim Covarrubias, Robert Buitron, Ralph Cordova, José Giron, Francisco Zúñiga and Joseph Sanchez sought to provide Chicanx/Mexican–American and Native

[129] The first person credited for using cyanotype was botanist Anna Atkins. Burns and Wilson have noted that she is also most likely the first woman to have made a photograph (13).

American creatives more opportunities for representation and visibility. According to its stated mission, their objective was "to promote and develop interest and support for the visual arts, and to establish an alternative space art gallery in the Chicano community" (Buchanan). Early art exhibitions took place in various locations throughout Phoenix including public spaces such as parks before the grassroots organization opened its first permanent gallery in 1981. Located in central Phoenix, MARS Artspace was a non-profit art and performance space dedicated to showcasing both local emerging and established talent at a time when many Chicanx/Latinx creatives were not welcomed in the city's more mainstream spaces. In 2016, Lopez described the significance of M.A.R.S. in an interview with "Sounds of Cultura," stating:

> I started out in 1982 and joined MARS, a Latino art group. I didn't know it at the time but that was the only place Latinos could show their artwork. I would go out to other places, to galleries in Scottsdale and Phoenix to show my artwork and examples for the pockets of an exhibition and I would always be turned away. That is when I learned we were being rejected solely on our Spanish surname or skin color. (Lopez, "Sounds of Cultura")

In addition to serving as an exhibition space, the gallery provided opportunities for Chicanx/Latinx community representation and interaction, and thus played a fundamental role in defining a space for its creatives that was at once social and material. As one of the first female members in the cooperative (see Fig. 5.1) Lopez's induction into M.A.R.S. was an eye-opening experience both artistically and intellectually,

exposing her to various dimensions of Mexican–American/Chicanx culture she was not familiar with. For example, in an interview with *Phoenix Magazine* the artist shared: "the first time I saw the Virgin of Guadalupe was at MARS. I grew up Catholic and never saw it in my church [. . .] I learned about being a Mexican, kind of, being around these people" (Lemoine).[130]

[130] On a personal level, Lopez's involvement with M.A.R.S. was also significant in that it introduced her to her husband, local artist Jeff Falk, who became the first Anglo–American member of the group in 1986. Lopez has commented on the significance of his acceptance into the group, as Faulk "was the first to be admitted who wasn't associated with someone brown, and it was a really, really big deal, a huge decision" (Buchanan).

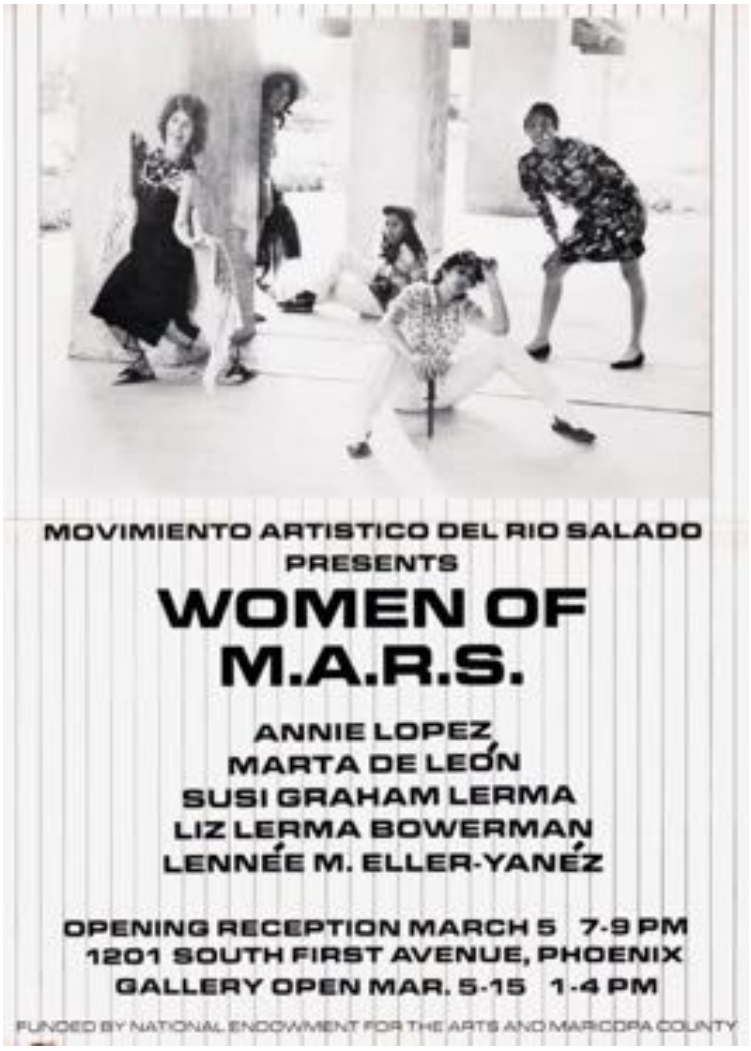

Fig. 5.1. *Women of M.A.R.S* Art Exhibit Invitation (1983). The art exhibit was held at 1201 South First Avenue, Phoenix and was Annie Lopez's first as an artist. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

As a member of M.A.R.S., Lopez began to explore Mexican–American/Chicanx cultural customs, symbols, and stereotypes through her artistic practice. For example, her collection "Spiritual Self Portrait Series" (1989) fused traditional Mexican/Chicanx religious iconography with personal photographs to represent the artist's personal experience following the tragic loss of her and her husband's first child. The piece "Self Portrait as the Virgin of Guadalupe" (see Fig. 5.2) includes the artist's face superimposed

on a traditional image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, along with the face of her husband as the guardian angel with the text "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe" below. The image is one of six in the collection that reference comments that were made to her during her grieving process, comparing her to a saint.

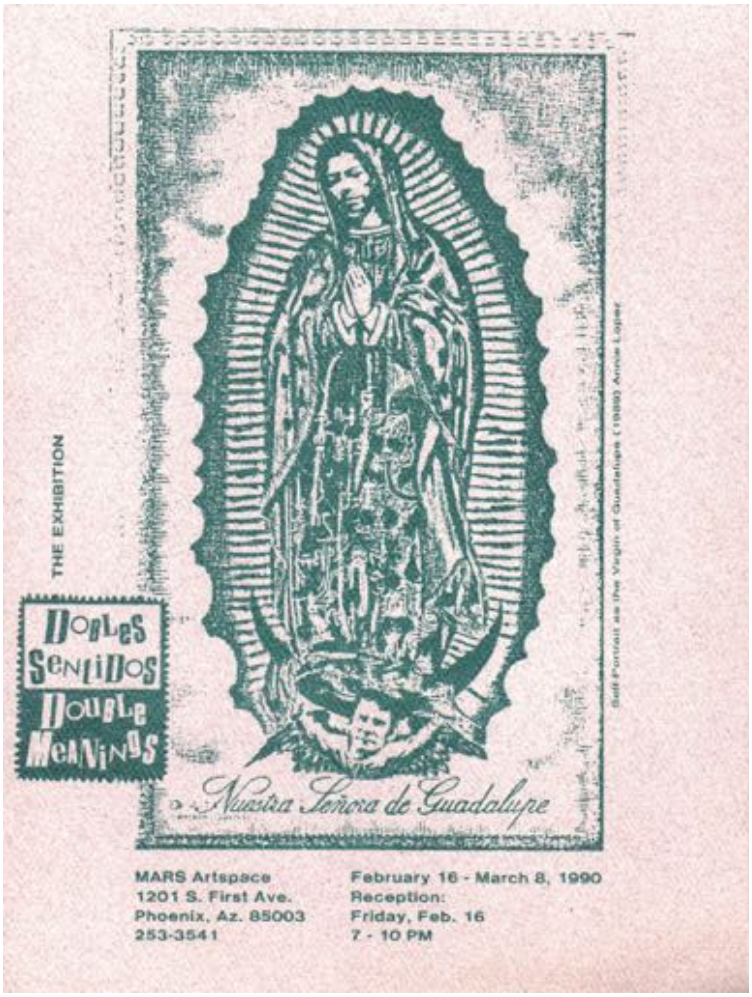

Fig. 5.2 *Dobles sentidos/Double Meanings* Art Exhibit Invitation (1990). The invitation features one of Lopez's pieces from the exhibit, titled "Self Portrait as the Virgin of Guadalupe." Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

Although the MARS Artspace officially closed its doors in 2002, in part due to a lack of funds and differing views within the group as to the nature of its future, its legacy has left a permanent mark on the Phoenix art scene. In 2002, an article published in a

local newspaper titled “Ghosts of Mars” described it as “a dynamic, energetic, edgy experience” and commended the art space as a “home for local talent” as well as well-known Chicanx artists from around the country including Luis Jimenez, Patsi Valdez, and Guillermo Gomez Peña (Buchanan). In the same article, Buchanan pointed to the importance of the cooperative’s social and community aspects by stating:

> People would come in and out, locations would change, but for many years the common thread of belonging to a movimiento helped the artists remain a cohesive unit well through the ‘80s. In its heyday during those years, the lonely gallery by then on First Street, tucked in the parking annex of the Luhrs Building was the heart of the art scene in Phoenix. (Buchanan)

Similarly, an article published in *Phoenix Magazine* in 2014 listed M.A.R.S. as number four in the “Valley’s top 10 defining art movements.” In it, associate director and senior curator at the Arizona State University Art Museum Heather Sealy Lineberry referred to the collective as part of “a venerable tradition of the artist-led cooperative and the artist-led organizing movements in Downtown Phoenix” (qtd. in Lemoine).

Furthermore, M.A.R.S. is one of the few references to Chicanx/Latinx artistic and creative production and presence in Arizona that is featured in critical anthologies and scholarly sources. For example, in one of the most recent and comprehensive reviews of Chicanx art titled *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology*, Ondine Chavoya listed the group as one of the many Chicanx-run arts institutions around the United States that “worked from the ‘ground up’ and supported Chicana/o art, artists, and communities

before more mainstream institutions began mounting exhibitions of Chicana/o art" (González 416). In addition, in *The Encyclopedia of Latino Popular Culture, Volume 1* (2004), James E. García described M.A.R.S. as "an important Latino arts organization [that] played an important role in promoting the arts in Arizona" alongside Museo Chicano in Phoenix and Xicanindio Artes in Mesa (Chavez Candelaria et al. 210). The inclusion of this local Phoenix cooperative amidst the likes of other major Chicanx/Latinx organizations and institutions in cities such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco is exemplary of its significance.

Despite these notable mentions, at the local level M.A.R.S. remains largely underrepresented. For example, in their study on Phoenix's Roosevelt Row, although Esser and Underwood do include the work of Chicanx/Latinx street artists Tato Caraveo, Lalo Cota, and El Mac as well as a brief mention of ArtLab15 (a small gallery space owned and operated by Annie Lopez and her husband in the 1990s) (8),[131] there is absolutely no mention of MARS Artspace nor other Chicanx/Latinx creatives in "the vision and transformation of a once largely forgotten section of downtown Phoenix" (6). Local artists, including members of M.A.R.S. and other Chicanx/Latinx creatives, have been fundamental in the transformation of Roosevelt Row and other neighboring areas. During the 1980s and 1990s, much of the downtown area exhibited the material effects of economic turmoil and redevelopment policies. Many artists began to work out of these less-than-desirable spaces, including once-abandoned buildings, attracting new crowds with their exhibitions and events. Within this context, the legacy of M.A.R.S. along with

[131] ArtLab15 was located at 515 East Roosevelt Street, Phoenix, Arizona.

other art initiatives can be read as early steps in the transformation of once depressed areas of Metropolitan Phoenix into a now vibrant cultural and artistic core.

In another example, in his study on Phoenix titled *Bird on Fire: Lessons from the World's Least Sustainable City* (2011), Andrew Ross does include M.A.R.S. in his discussion of Latinx presence in the downtown area but describes it as ephemeral, saying "the provisional spaces they had opened and operated since left no permanent mark [. . .] on the downtown landscape, and nothing remotely like the impact of the artist zones on Roosevelt Row and Grand Street" (114). Ross' account neglects the lasting impact of this pioneering Chicanx arts cooperative on the present-day Phoenix art scene. In his survey of Latinx art and culture centers, García underscored the importance of these institutions both as physical and imaged spaces, stating:

> while the primary goal of these institutions has been to promote and preserve Latino arts and culture, Latino cultural centers, most of which are not for profit, also have played an important role in articulating the social and political interests of the community. (Chavez Candelaria et al. 207)

In the case of M.A.R.S. and its spaces, as some of the sole places Chicanx/Latinx artists were able to show their artwork in the city at the time, it is conceivable that they not only contributed to the promotion and continuity of Chicanx/Latinx art in Phoenix but inspired future creatives and community initiatives.

“Hispanic Series” (1980s–Present Day)

Lopez began her “Hispanic Series” collection in the early 1980s during her time with M.A.R.S. as a means to explore her own cultural identity and Mexican/Mexican–American roots while representing some of her own personal experiences both in Phoenix’s art scene as well as her personal life. The collection, spanning over three decades, includes a mix of traditional photographic methods and print media mixed with text. The short text excepts, many times only consisting of one line, evoke a sense of satire or irony regarding complex topics such as cultural and ethnic and gender stereotypes, expectations, and discrimination (both intra- and intercommunity). Rather opposed to labels herself, the pieces included in the “Hispanic Series” interrogate fixed notions of identity, nationhood, and art and their discontinuities. The artist described her initial inspiration for the collection in an interview with local publication *Cronkite News* by saying: “my artwork was rejected from a show because it was not Chicano enough and in another place it was rejected for being too Chicano, so I couldn’t quite figure out what it is I’m supposed to be” (Lang).

For example, “Make Tortillas” (see Fig. 5.3) features a vintage photograph of the artist’s mother alongside something she often said to her: “you will never get a man to marry you if you don’t learn to make tortillas.” As the middle child in a family of five, growing up Lopez was responsible for helping her mother make tortillas after school. The statement plays on cultural and gender norms that stereotype cooking as women’s responsibility. Although in this case the piece is reflective of Mexican/Mexican–American/ Chicanx culture, it displays a certain universal legibility based on traditional

gender roles and socialization. “Make Tortillas” was selected as the 1993 Billboard Art Contest Winner and was displayed in Tucson, Arizona for a short period before being removed following protests from members outside the Mexican community.

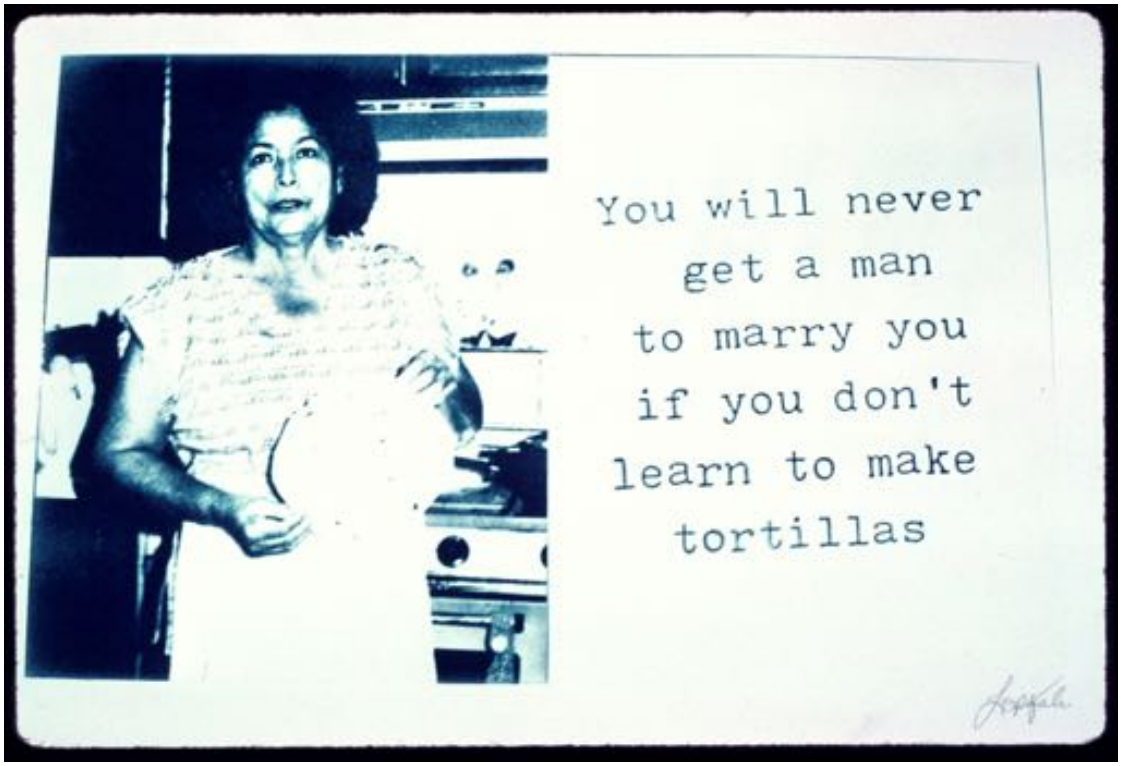

Fig 5.3. *Make Tortillas* (1991). The piece features a photograph of the artist’s mother alongside a line she often said to her. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

“Didn’t Come Out of the Barrio” (see Fig. 5.4) and “More Than Tacos” (see Fig. 5.5) also address familiar cultural and ethnic stereotypes through irony. Both pieces were completed during the artist’s time with M.A.R.S. and feature vintage family photographs (including photographs of the artist herself as a child) printed on paper paired with text excerpts. The short texts reference generalized representations of Mexican–American/Chicanx identity that Lopez experienced in her own life, including perceptions of the Mexican–American/Chicanx experience as an exclusively ‘barrio’ experience. In

reality, her family history reflects an agricultural background tied to the northern areas of Phoenix. Both of her parents were born and raised north of Thomas Road in the early twentieth century; albeit being surrounded by other Mexican families, these neighborhoods were not located in the city's more well-known Hispanic barrios, many of them located south of Van Buren Street (Lopez).

Fig. 5.4. *Didn't Come Out of the Barrio* (1992). The piece features a photograph of the artist and her brother as children printed using xerography. The text is a witty reference to her own experience confronting ethnic and cultural stereotypes that equate Mexican/Mexican–American heritage with a strictly 'barrio' experience. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

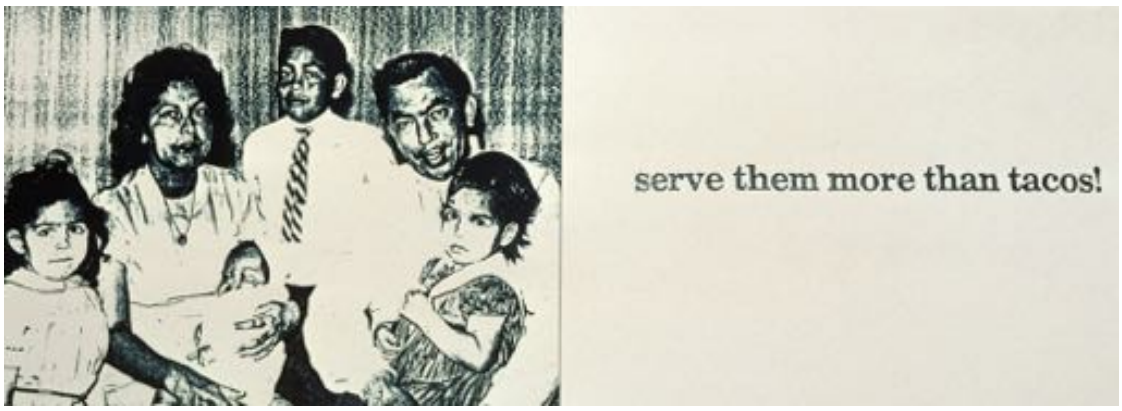

Fig. 5.5 *More Than Tacos* (1992). The piece features a photograph of the artist as a child with her family printed using xerography. The text references ethnic and cultural stereotypes surrounding Mexican and Mexican–Americans. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

The following examples, "Two Maracas Shy" (see Fig. 5.6), "I Allowed People" (see Fig. 5.7), and "I Look Mexican" (see Fig. 5.8) are more recent additions to the collection. "Two Maracas Shy" features variations of two photographs printed on tamale wrapper paper using cyanotype and laid out in a grid-like pattern. In the center of the top and bottom rows is the text "Two Maracas Shy of a Stereotype." The photographs are of two young women from Lopez's family: one, the artist's Tia Lola (her mother's younger sister) and the other, her uncle's former girlfriend.

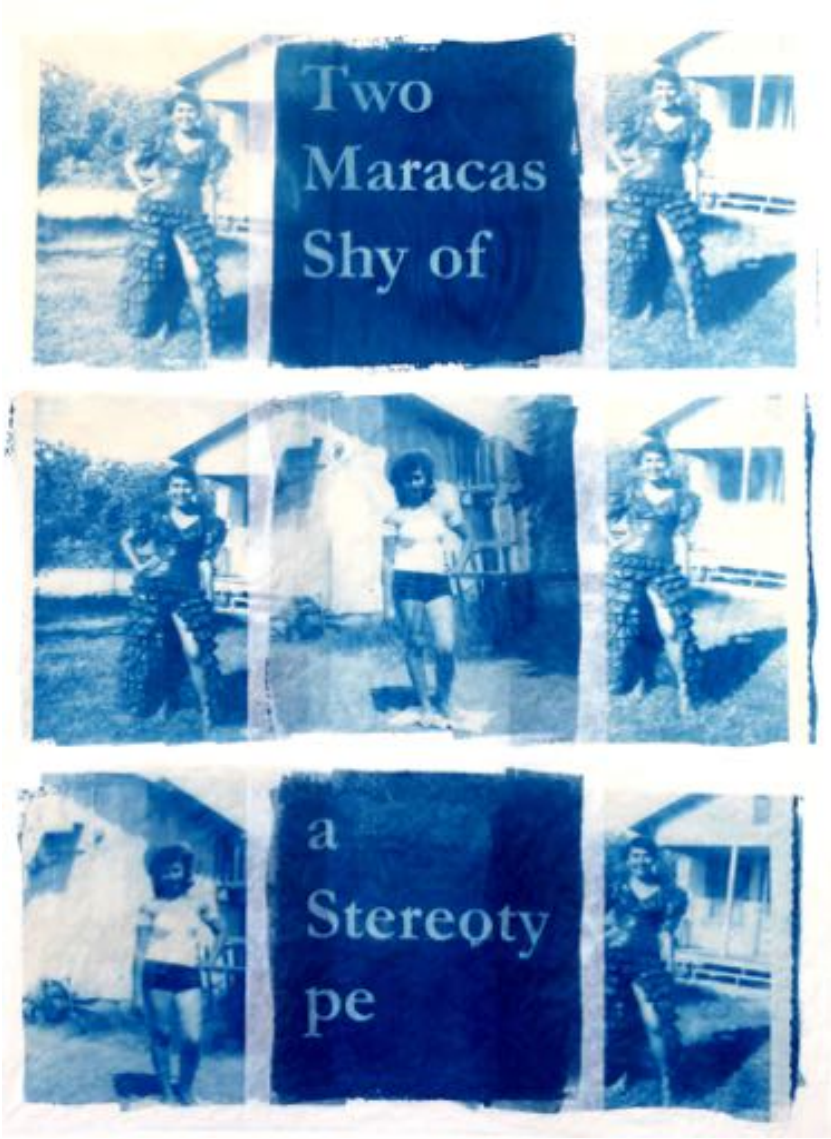

Fig. 5.6. *Two Maracas Shy* (2009). The piece features photographs of the artist's Tia Lola and her uncle's former girlfriend collected from her mother's photo album. The photographs are reprinted on tamale wrapper paper using cyanotype. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

"I Allowed People" also features vintage family photographs printed in cyanotype (this time of the artist herself) displayed in a grid-like pattern similar to "Two Maracas Shy." In the middle, the words "iallowedpeopletothinkiwasanythingbutmexican" appear in white against a dark background. The visual organization of the text, printed without spaces between the words, impedes quick comprehension and legibility and thus requires

extended attention from the viewer. Lopez has described the meaning of the text as follows:

> The statement comes from my experiences out in the world. I have had many people guess my ethnicity, without my asking. Some guesses were Polynesian, Syrian, Native American, Italian and even Black Irish. When I tell people I am of Mexican descent, they look disappointed. (Lopez)

Of course, since the photographs (originally black and white) are printed in cyanotype, we cannot see the color of her skin. This brings an element of irony to the piece, as it underscores the contradictions —and oftentimes, absurdity— of preconceived notions of what a culture or ethnicity should "look like."

Fig. 5.7 *I Allowed People* (2011). The piece includes images of the artist as a young child printed in cyanotype. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

Similarly, her piece "I Look Mexican" also plays on the same preconceived notions linking physical appearance to ethnicity or nationality. The artwork has been repeated in three different forms over the years, first appearing as Xerography, then as an artist book, and finally printed on tamale wrapper paper (shown here). In the 2016 version, six copies of a photograph of the artist's older sister are printed in cyanotype and

laid out in three rows. The first and last photograph include the text “I Look Mexican” printed against a white background directly below the image. Since the camera is rather far away, we can only see that the young girl is wearing a light colored dress, her hair cut short with bangs, but cannot make out any details. Thus, the viewer may be prompted to ask themselves what exactly makes her “look Mexican,” or what is it exactly that makes anyone “look Mexican”? Moreover, as the image is not actually of the artist herself, it may be interpreted as a witty play on cultural/ethic stereotypes as being interchangeable or “all looking alike.” As in the case of the other pieces included in the “Hispanic Series,” this artwork requires that the viewer look closely at the layered meanings embedded in the image/text, perhaps reflecting on their own ideas —and misconceptions— of cultural identity.

Fig. 5.8. *I Look Mexican* (2016). This piece has appeared in three different forms. The most recent version features a photograph of the artist's older sister reprinted in cyanotype on tamale wrapper paper and laid out in three rows. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

The "Hispanic Series" began nearly four decades ago as the artist's own personal journey toward exploring her cultural identity as a Mexican–American woman in Arizona. The series is perhaps one of Lopez's most notable and influential collections as it spans almost the entirety of her career, tracing the evolution of her artistic work with various photographic methods and forms. Alongside this gradual process of creative self-

discovery, Lopez's use of personal photographs representing multiple generations, life events, and experiences also serves as a material documentation of her family's history as long-time Mexican–American residents of the United States.

"The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" (2007)

"The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" (2007) series consists of fifteen pieces, each featuring a different vintage photograph printed in cyanotype on watercolor paper with a text excerpt below. The collection was purchased by the Phoenix Art Museum, where it was displayed in three rows of five frames (see Fig. 5.9).[132] Lopez chose not to include personal or family photographs in this collection, opting for a selection of anonymous historical photographs she obtained from various sources, including vintage shops and estate sales. The photographs paired with cohesive element of the cyanotype blue convey an assumed 'historicity,' albeit deceiving. Although the short texts act as descriptions of the photographs, they do not correspond to the actual images. Rather, they narrate "Almost Real" histories surrounding the artist, her city, and its largest art museum. As indicated in its title, the series provides a deliberately satirical perspective on both the artist's own experiences as a Mexican–American artist in Phoenix as well as the history of the city's art scene itself; according to Lopez: "the stories in this series are true, though some are slightly exaggerated. Some pieces mention a bit of lost Phoenix history completely ignored or never learned by our transient population" ("Art Guides" 3).

[132] "The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" (2007) was displayed in the Phoenix Art Museum in 2007. It is currently not on view.

Fig. 5.9. *The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix* (2007). Cyanotype. Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds provided by Eva and Eric Jungerman Family Endowment. Courtesy of the Phoenix Art Museum.

"Ida and Ray" (see Fig. 5.10) is the first piece featured in the second row. The image is a vintage photograph of a crowd (subjects unknown) with the following text printed below:

> Disgruntled visual artists Ida and Ray (center) arranged for a protest photo in front of the Art Museum of Phoenix. After years of donating their work to be sold by the museum at bargain prices to raise money to

> purchase the works of artists from New Hampshire, Phoenix artists had had enough. They refused to donate any more work until the museum agreed to collect and exhibit local artists. Artists arrived for photos in droves. Unfortunately, Ida and Ray forgot to bring protest signs and the sitting fee. The photographer took the shot anyway and sold it to the museum. Captioned, "Art museum supporters", the photograph helped the museum secure government funding.

Although the story of Ida and Ray is fictional, its meaning is rooted in true events. The text describes a period in the Phoenix Art Museum's history when it asked local artists to donate their pieces and auctioned them off in order to purchase art from more well-known artists outside of Arizona. Lopez has explained that her and other "disgruntled visual artists" would get together to express their discontent, often feeling used or even embarrassed, even considering protesting in front of the museum. In reality, they never did so (Lopez).

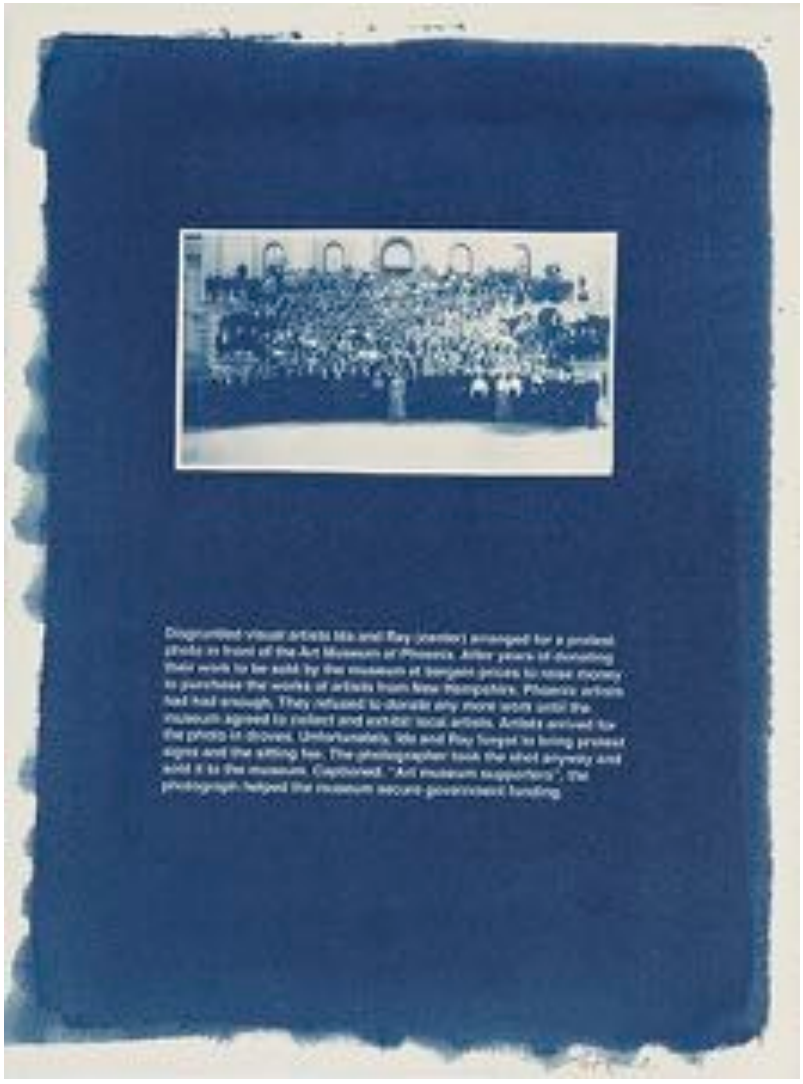

Fig. 5.10. *Ida and Ray*. Annie Lopez, *The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix,* 2007. Cyanotype. Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds provided by Eva and Eric Jungerman Family Endowment. Courtesy of the Phoenix Art Museum.

Also displayed in the second row, "Joe and Greta" (Fig. 5.11) includes a vintage photograph of an unknown couple standing in front of a car, facing the camera. The text below reads: "After twenty-five years of national exhibition experience, Joe and Greta could shake the 'Emerging Artist' label." This seemingly simple description, composed of only one sentence, is in reality a poignant remark about the artist's own experience along with her husband's, artist Jeff Falk. In the past, Lopez has been very vocal about

the underrepresentation of local artists in Phoenix, a pattern that is repeated in the Phoenix Art Museum even today in its limited selection of artworks by Arizona artists (both owned and exhibited). In her own case, despite being active for decades and receiving recognition from some of the country's most prestigious galleries and institutions, including the National Hispanic Cultural Center and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., for years she was not recognized in Phoenix. However, this has changed in recent years; from the period 2012–2017 alone Lopez was the recipient of five prestigious awards, including the Governor's Arts Award (2016) and the Mayor's Art Award from the Phoenix Center for the Arts (2017). In addition, local publications *AZ Central Newspaper, Phoenix New Times*, and *Cronkite News* have featured her work, naming Lopez a "pioneer of Phoenix art scene" (Lengel).

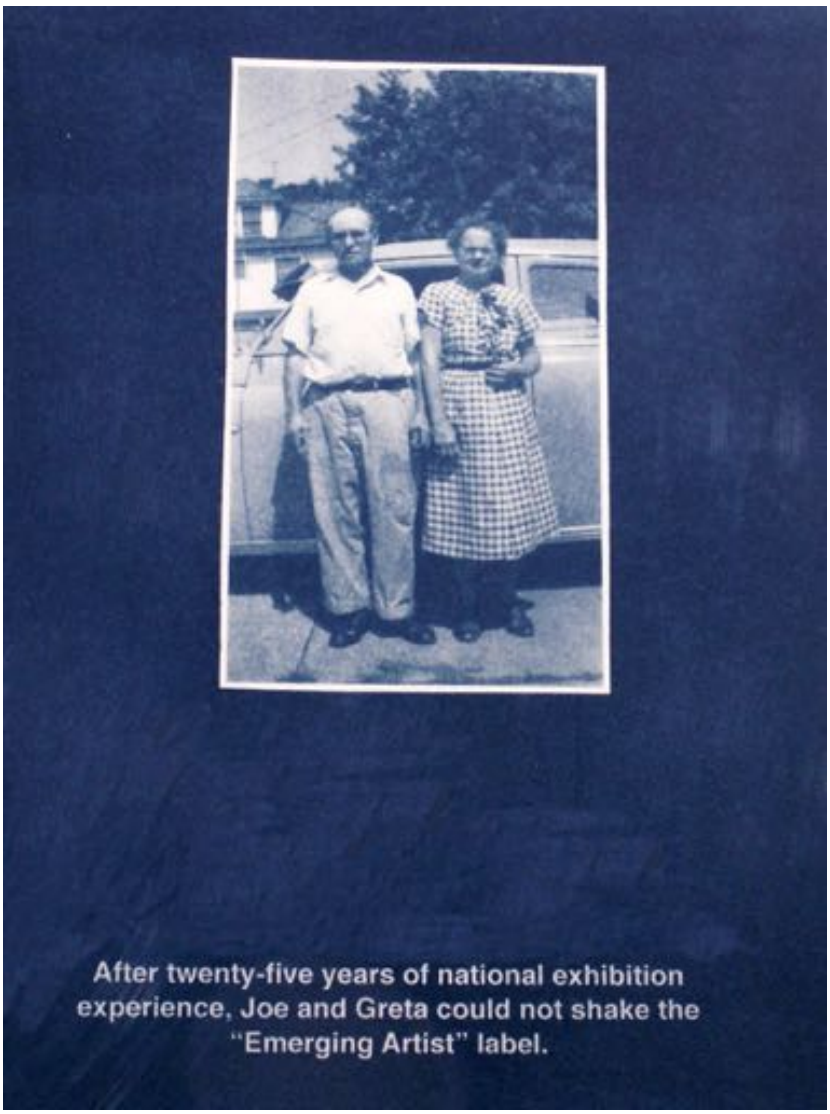

Fig. 5.11. *Joe and Greta*. Annie Lopez, *The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix,* 2007. Cyanotype. Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds provided by Eva and Eric Jungerman Family Endowment. Courtesy of the Phoenix Art Museum.

The final piece displayed in the series, "The First White Woman" (see Fig. 5.12) features a vintage photograph of an unknown Anglo–Saxon woman wearing a large straw hat and dressed in a long dress (possibly end of the eighteenth–early nineteenth century). The accompanying text reads, "Ellie, the first white woman to live in Phoenix. She used a trust fund and her husband's Spanish surname to open a two-room adobe gallery. Located

near Swilling's ditch, it featured work by the indigenous people of Phoenix." The short text, composed of only three sentences, reveals multiple layers of meaning. As the artist herself has indicated, the text refers to the case of Anglo–Saxon female artists using their husband's Hispanic last names in order to receive grants or exhibition opportunities in the 1990s (Lopez).

However, in addition to this statement about Phoenix's art scene, the piece also reflects an implicit historical reference; first, by listing "Ellie" as "the first white woman to live in Phoenix," the text subverts the common perception of early Phoenix as a "fundamentally Anglo place" (Oberle and Arreola 172). Furthermore, Lopez's reference to adobe architecture, a style introduced to the area by Mexican residents who were also responsible for the construction of many of its edifices, also honors their contribution to early Phoenix. When seen in this light, the artwork may draw attention to Phoenix's Hispanic past while potentially reversing popular misconceptions surrounding its Chicanx/Latinx population as necessarily newcomers to the Valley.

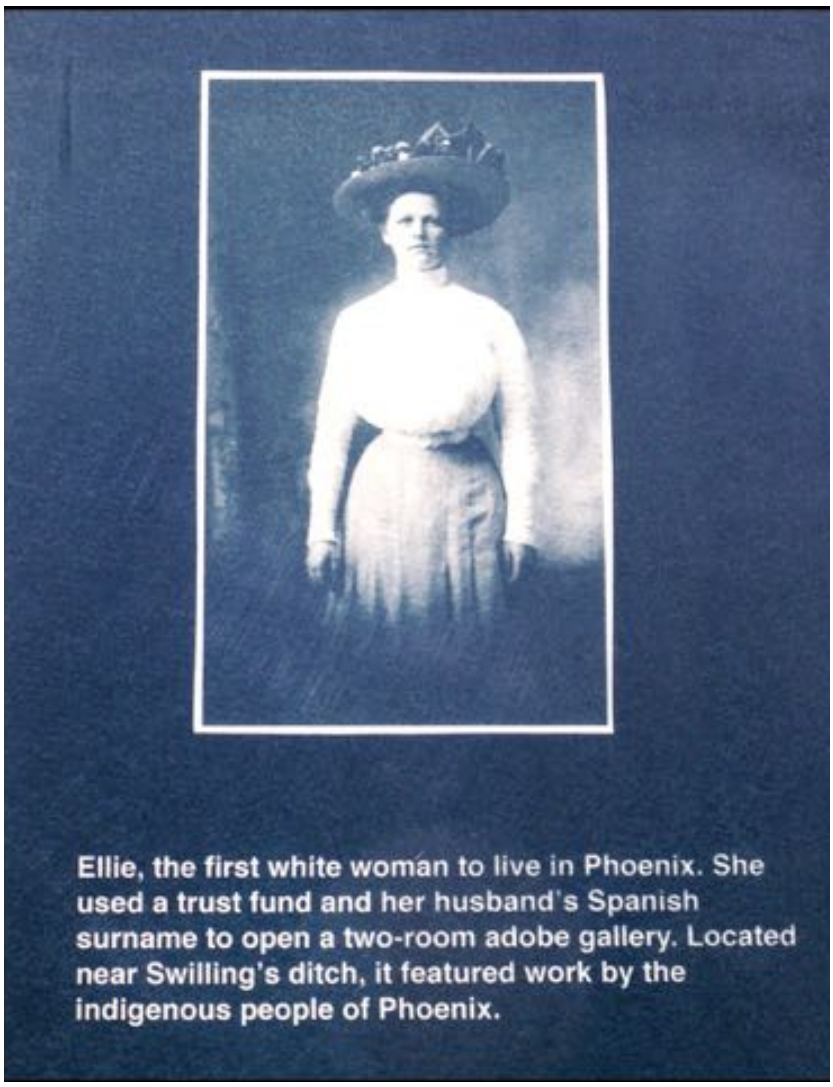

Fig. 5.12. *The First White Woman*. Annie Lopez, *The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix,* 2007. Cyanotype. Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds provided by Eva and Eric Jungerman Family Endowment. Courtesy of the Phoenix Art Museum.

The artworks included in the "The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" series work as a unique form of visual storytelling that addresses the hidden histories of Phoenix as well as its art scene. Lopez plays with the power of the monochrome vintage photographs as visual media with an assumed historical authority to trigger viewer engagement, and then unsettles it through the adjoined text. As a result, the viewer is forced to take a more active role in assembling (or reassembling) the historical and

autobiographical fragments, questioning the "official" versions of history as they piece together their own alternate one.

Cyanotype Dress Series (2012–Present Day)

In 2012, during an informal conversation with friend and museum curator of the Phoenix Art Museum (at the time) Sara Cochran, Lopez expressed she was going through a difficult period and said "someday I'm going to sew all my troubles into a dress" (Lang). Later in 2013, the idea took material form as an exhibit at the Phoenix Museum of Art, with a collection of three dimensional dresses. The dresses reflect a range of styles, all popular in the 1950s–1960s. The series marks a transition in Lopez's body of work from two-dimensional pieces to more sculptural, three-dimensional pieces. In addition to incorporating remnants of her own personal and family history and memories growing up in Phoenix, this new medium also reflects a very personal connection to the artist as she learned how to sew at the young age of eight and currently still works as a full-time seamstress at a local uniform store in Phoenix (Jarvis).

Each piece features an average of 20–40 different cyanotypes, combining photographs, images, and text, printed onto tamale wrapper paper and then sewn together to make the garment (Lopez, "Sounds of Cultura"). The collection reveals a particularly intimate link to the field of Somaesthetics that can be identified at nearly all levels of the creative process, from the way in which it was produced to the meaning behind each garment. Created as a means for the artist to process her own emotions, the images used are not only extremely personal —ranging from text messages between family members

and childhood report cards to her father's handwriting— but their preparation required a very physical process. Each garment was hand-made by the artist though an extremely laborious process; using cyanotype (a contact-based printing method) Lopez reprinted the materials onto tamale wrapper paper and then sewed them together like cloth (Lopez, "Sounds of Cultura"). She then layered the dress patterns over the tamale wrapper paper 'fabric' and cut out each piece of the pattern by hand, sewing each section together again to form the garment. Her use of tamale wrapper paper and dress forms is also significant, honoring her Mexican/Mexican–American heritage while also addressing beauty and aesthetic norms that tell women how to look and dress.

In the following sections I will examine three pieces from the dress collection, "Naturalized Citizens" (2013), "I Never Learned Spanish" (2013), and "Favorite Things" (2016), respectively. Completed in 2013, "Naturalized Citizens" (see Fig. 5.13) utilizes copies of the artist's maternal grandparents' naturalization records sewn into an over the knee, sleeveless pouf dress that is belted at the waist. The naturalization process is a legal process by which United States citizenship is granted to foreign citizens or nationals once they have fulfilled the requirements. The artist obtained copies of the documents through the Freedom of Information Act, including signed petition forms and photographs. The dress can be interpreted as a material historical record honoring the long-standing presence of the Mexican/Mexican–American population in Arizona, many of whom lived in the region prior to it becoming part of the United States in 1912. In doing so, the dress makes a poignant statement about the anti-immigrant sentiments and stereotypes surrounding the legal status of Arizona's Latinx residents that were revived following the

implementation of the "Support our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act" (Arizona State Bill 1070) in 2010. The piece responds directly to the "show your papers" provision that was upheld by the Court, requiring police to arrest anyone suspected to have committed a crime while residing in the state 'illegally.'

Fig. 5.13. *Naturalized Citizens* (2013). The piece utilizes copies of her maternal grandparents' naturalization records sewn into a belted pouf dress. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

The piece "I Never Learned Spanish" (see Fig. 5.14) includes excerpts from Spanish dictionaries and textbooks printed on tamale wrapper paper using cyanotype and sewn into a sleeveless, A-line dress. It is a reference to the artist's own attempts in the past to learn the language; as a monolingual in English, Lopez has encountered many stereotypes and prejudices over the years surrounding her knowledge of Spanish, both from within and from outside the Mexican–American community. Her experience reflects that of many Mexican–American/Latinx residents of the United States, highlighting common (mis)conceptions that link language to cultural/national identity.

In addition to the artist's own experience, the piece also implicitly addresses the broader topic of Spanish language in the United States. This history is especially complicated in the southwestern region as it encompasses centuries-long shifts in social and linguistic perceptions and attitudes that have inevitably played a role in shaping contemporary socio-economic and political structures, including official language legislation (such as English–Only policies). Among other factors, including negative portrayals of Spanish (and thus, those who speak it) as well as family language practices and individual preferences, these linguistic perceptions continue to impact its maintenance and use even today.

In Arizona, the relationship between Spanish and English language use in public contexts has been tumultuous to say the least. In Phoenix, although Mexican/Mexican–American students were not forced to adhere to the same forms of legalized segregation as their African–American neighbors, many informal segregation practices were employed in schools in the early twentieth century. For example, researcher Darius V.

Echeverría has called attention to the use of "special education, ability and discipline grouping, curriculum tracking, linguistic lessons, and 'Americanization' classes [that] were unremittingly used to separate Arizonan–Mexican students from their Anglo classmates" (19). In the same study, Echeverría also pointed to the use of "beginning English classes" implemented in Arizona schools from 1919–1965:

> Arizonan–Mexican students as young as age six were placed in such classes in order to help "Americanize" them. These classes, although sometimes housed on Anglo school property, segregated Mexican Americans by establishing "Mexican buildings", "Mexican rooms", "Mexican sections", and "Mexican facilities." (19)

Echeverría's analysis sheds light on the social consequences of these forms of informal segregation, including unequal education, discrimination, and even influenced attitudes towards language and culture. In the case of the artist's family, her father attended Washington Elementary School in Phoenix and was put into a segregated grade 1– 4 "Mexican class" during the mid-1930s–1940s (Lopez). Lopez has shared how her father's experience impacted how he wanted his children to live, possibly even his own relationship with the Spanish language (Lopez). Thus, in addition to representing the artist's own personal experience with the language, "I Never Learned Spanish" also addresses the especially complex history of language ideologies, domination, politics and policy in the United States.

Fig. 5.14. *I Never Learned Spanish* (2013). The piece includes excerpts from Spanish dictionaries and textbooks reprinted in cyanotype on tamale wrapper paper and sewn into a sleeveless, A-line dress. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

Also included in the series, "Favorite Things" (see Fig. 5.15) is just that; an amalgamation of the artist's favorite things growing up in Phoenix in the 1960s–70s.

Rather than utilizing personal photographs, the artist collected different materials —from newspaper clippings and sports programs to a restaurant menu— that reminded her of her favorite places, events, and memories in the city. The images were printed onto tamale wrapper paper using cyanotype and pieced together to form a belted pouf dress. Its high ruched neckline and cap-sleeve reflects a popular style of the period. In an interview with Arizona PBS's "Sounds of Cultura" in 2016 Lopez discussed the dress, explaining some elements viewers may not have noticed:

> I loved going to see Road Runner and Suns games. My family went to Pancake House after church on Sundays. There is also an ad for the play 'Annie', which I saw at what is now the Orpheum. (Lopez, "Sounds of Cultura")

The result is a unique, quilt-like pattern that pays homage to both the artist's childhood as well as a specific place-based identity and experience tied to Phoenix. Accordingly, the dress can be interpreted as a homage to the city itself, enabling the viewer to 'recreate' or 'map' some of its landmarks, locales, and events of the period; among them, Dairy Queen, Uncle John's Pancake House, the Metro Center shopping mall, and the former Place West theatre in downtown Phoenix.[133] In this sense, its purpose twofold: for residents of Phoenix, many of them 'transplants' and 'snowbirds', it may be a glimpse into the city's past, while for other viewers not familiar with the city, it

[133] The theatre was purchased by Mexican Felix Corona in the 1960s where he presented a series of Spanish–language movies and events (Barrios 110). As an important Latinx cultural space in the downtown area of the period, it can be considered part of Phoenix's 'forgotten' Mexican/Latinx past.

presents them with a visual storytelling of its social and physical landscapes of the 1960s–70s.

Fig. 5.15. *Favorite Things* (2016). The artist collected various materials from newspaper clippings and sports programs to a restaurant menu to represent her favorite memories growing up in Phoenix during the 1960s–1970s. Courtesy of Annie Lopez.

Other dresses featured in the series address a variety of themes ranging from family illness and tensions, with pieces that reference her father's battle with Alzheimer's

and her role as caretaker, things her mother would tell her as a teenager, and Mexican/Mexican–American culture and traditions such as Día de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead). I have called special attention to Lopez's collection of dresses not only as an important transition in her body of work to more sculptural art, but for its somaesthetic element that extends from the creative process to the final product. Each garment represents the material expression of a personal (at times, even traumatic) memory or event in the artist's life displayed publicly for viewers to see. In turn, the dresses act much like a scrapbook or family album that takes three dimensional form. The intricate blend of layered histories and meanings is at once personal and communal, displaying an element of universality and relatability that allows viewers to engage with the artworks regardless of their own cultural/ethnic background or geographic location.

Conclusion

Spanning nearly four decades, Annie Lopez's body of work presents an extremely intimate dialectic between individual and collective identity, history, and memory. Through a multimodal approach, the artist employs both autobiographical and historical elements translated into a variety of mediums, ranging from xerography and traditional black and white photography to cyanotypes displayed in three dimensional garments. Her playful use of ethnic, cultural, and gender stereotypes evokes a sense of universality that invites the viewer to participate in critical reflection. Perhaps as an extension of the artist herself, Lopez's work resists and interrogates fixed classifications of 'Chicanx Art' and cultural identity in both its content and form.

Much like the individual pieces themselves, the significance of Lopez's contribution is also multifaceted and can be interpreted within the larger framework of its historical, social, and cultural environment. Specifically, her artwork reveals a direct connection to her life and experiences in Phoenix, Arizona. By documenting her own past experiences and challenges as a female Mexican–American artist, including a tumultuous relationship with the city's mainstream art scene, it also serves as a tribute to its long-standing, vibrant Chicanx/Latinx creative community. Her life and work are in fact inseparable from both the history of the Chicanx/Latinx and mainstream art in Phoenix, revealing significant social and spatial shifts that have impacted the city's art institutions and spaces. These shifts range from her early period in the 1980s as a member of El Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado (one of the only groups at the time dedicated to exhibiting the work of Chicanx/Latinx creatives) to her more recent shows at mainstream spaces like the Tempe Center for the Arts, the Phoenix Art Museum, and the Arizona Historical Society Museum. The artist commented on these changes in an interview with "Sounds of Cultura," affirming that "things have really changed and gotten terrific" (Lopez).

In recent years, some of the city's mainstream art institutions have made efforts to end a long history of underrepresentation of its local (and especially, minority) artists. For example, in April of 2020 the Phoenix Art Museum announced a new initiative to become the first fully bilingual institution of its size in the United States (Durón). In addition, it has reaffirmed its mission to "diversify its exhibitions and showcase works by artists from underrepresented communities" ("Phoenix Art Museum receives $300,000

grant") by announcing the opening of a new exhibition in May 2020 showcasing the largest collection of abstract Latin American art in the United States. However, despite these recent changes, the lack of visibility and attention to its local and minority artists, especially female artists, is undeniable. For example, the Phoenix Art Museum's Americas and Western American collection does not include any Chicanx/Latinx art, a genre integral to both southwestern and American art as a whole. An article published in a local Phoenix newspaper in 2017 noted this issue that belies many of the city's major institutions, stating:

> The Arizona Latino Arts and Culture Center (ALAC) is the only established bastion of Hispanic or Latino culture in Phoenix, and it is not even recognized on Phoenix Public Library's Culture Pass or anywhere in VisitPhoenix's Arts and Culture directory. Even on the website of the Arizona Office of Tourism, the ALAC is nearly impossible to find without knowing exactly where to look. (Baker)

Recent talks surrounding its newest Latino Cultural Center to be built in the downtown area hope to help remediate this absence; the multi-million dollar initiative is projected to be "*on par and in company* with Phoenix's other major cultural institutions and arts centers located downtown" ("Phoenix Latino Cultural Center" 6). As the city steps into a new period of transition, it is unclear how its art scene will be impacted. Without a doubt, its Chicanx/Latinx creative community will continue to reflect the same resilience and tenacity it has for over a century, as its artists express new forms, aesthetics, and experiences specific to their Borderland identities. This chapter has

attempted to draw attention to the work of Annie Lopez as an emblematic example of this long-standing community in Phoenix. I argue that the history of its Chicanx/Latinx community and its artistic and cultural production, albeit underrepresented and often ignored, cannot be separated from the history of Phoenix as a whole. Since its founding at the end of the nineteenth century, its Hispanic history and influences have been inscribed onto the social and material fabric of a city falsely known as "the most ahistorical community in the United States" (Johnson qtd. in Oberle and Arreola 172).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND A GLIMPSE AT THE BLOOMING FLORES DEL DESIERTO: NEW GENERATIONS OF CHICANX/LATINX ARTISTS AND CULTURE PRODUCERS IN PHOENIX

Over the course of its history, the ethnic, cultural, and ideological influences of the various groups that have inhabited Arizona —among them, indigenous, European, Mexican, Anglo, and Mexican–American— have left an indelible mark on its land and people. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, despite being fully incorporated into the United States in February 1912, Arizona's long-standing connections south of the border were not severed. Instead, the multi-directional "bumping" (Vélez-Ibáñez 6) with Mexico continued, playing an integral role in the survival and success of its frontier communities. Arizona's multiethnic/multicultural roots have expressed themselves both materially through the built environment and ideologically in the day-to-day lives of its residents. In its capital, various social, economic, and political factors have contributed to the formation of a distinctive cultural identity that contrasts with that of other regions of the southwestern United States. Among them, I have outlined the role of political legislation, housing policies, demographic shifts, and the social and spatial segregation of its minority populations over the course of the twentieth century that have impacted Phoenix's socio-spatial configuration. These factors are pertinent to the settlement, development, and composition of the city's Chicanx/Latinx communities, both early and contemporary.

This dissertation examined the work of Stella Pope Duarte, Lucinda Y Hinojos (La Morena), and Annie Lopez as examples of how Chicanx/Latinx female creatives have utilized diverse artistic mediums and forms to represent, mitigate, and express their Borderland identities. Their body of work evokes a place/space-specific discourse, drawing upon local cultural, spatial, and eco-somaesthetic elements articulated in Phoenix. As I have explained, their work reflects a dynamic, hybrid cultural identity that is grounded in the social, ecological, and physical realities of life in the "Valley of the Sun." The narratives of Stella Pope Duarte offer an intimate look into the lives and spaces of Phoenix's Chicanx residents by highlighting parts of the city not represented in popular media and often overlooked by outsiders and tourists alike. Her unique use of natural and corporal elements allows for a more nuanced depiction of barrio residents that subverts popular negative representations. Lucinda Y Hinojos (La Morena) also represents the cultural identity and concerns of Phoenix's barrio residents, this time interjected into its public space. Her muralism or "artivism" is rooted in the artist's social justice and activism work, as it addresses issues of female empowerment, domestic violence, spirituality, and community solidarity. By representing mostly women of color and undocumented children as her subjects, La Morena invites viewers to engage with contemporary social issues that affect their communities locally, nationally, and internationally. Similarly, from her early work as part of El Movimiento del Río Salado (M.A.R.S.), Annie Lopez has given visibility and representation to Phoenix's Chicanx/Latinx community through her artwork. Her work with cyanotype photography entails a composition of histories and experiences that are at once personal and collective,

presenting critical insights into the problematic nature of identity and history. Throughout her career, Lopez's exhibitions have presented a satirical interrogation of notions of ethnic, cultural, and gender stereotypes as well as conventional tales of history.

This dissertation emerged as a response to the lack of scholarly research and public acknowledgement of Phoenix's Chicanx/Latinx communities as well as their artistic and cultural production. As the largest urban center in the American Southwest, boasting one of the highest concentrations of Latinx residents in the country, Phoenix displays a unique, heterogenous Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity that is worthy of further study. My preliminary research on the topic has revealed a critical gap in contemporary Borderland research that I believe continues to propagate false notions of a homogeneous, panLatinx identity throughout the American Southwest. Ultimately, the history of Phoenix's Chicanx/Latinx communities cannot be separated from the history of the city itself. The struggle of its creative community for equal representation is an important part of the history of the city's artistic and cultural institutions, echoing the struggle of Chicanx artists throughout the United States.

As a testament to a rising new generation of Chicanx/Latinx creatives in the city, in the following sections I will examine the work of up-and-coming female art and culture producers Sam Fresquez, Melissa Dunmore, Diana Calderon, Chela Chelinski, and Las Chollas Peligrosas. These talented young artists shy away from nostalgic notions of cultural nationalism and fixed ideals of ethnic, cultural, and sexual identity and instead present new concepts and aesthetics that are informed by their place-specific, "lived somaesthetic experiences" (Shusterman, *Body Consciousness* 63).

Sam Fresquez (Interdisciplinary Artist) (b. 1996)

As an interdisciplinary artist, Sam Fresquez engages with a wide variety of themes, including cultural identity, religion, language, sexuality, and gender, expressed through various artistic mediums. Among them, she utilizes both natural and hand-made materials such as wood, paper, fabric, and hair, as well as metals, plexiglass, and plastics to interrogate traditional cultural/gender norms and aesthetics.

A graduate from the Bachelors of Fine Arts program at Arizona State University, Fresquez has been extremely active in the Phoenix art scene and beyond. In the period from 2018–2019 alone, she participated in thirteen exhibitions (solo and invitational) as well as artist residencies in Maine, Manhattan, Vermont, and Massachusetts. Her pieces have been exhibited locally at The Sagrado Galleria, Modified Arts, Xico Inc. Arte y Cultura, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Phoenix Art Museum, as well as internationally at the Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain). Her work has been featured in prestigious juried exhibitions including the "2018 Arizona Biennial" at the Tucson Museum of Art and "Paper Routes-Women to Watch 2020" at the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. In addition, she was the recipient of the 2015 Artist of the Year Award at the Metropolitan Arts Institute and in June 2019 was named one of three "up-and-coming local artists you need to know" by Phoenix Home & Garden magazine (Roark).

As a native of Phoenix whose family has resided in Arizona since the early twentieth century, many of her pieces investigate the relationship between personal and collective history set within the context of colonialization. In 2018, Fresquez was selected

to participate in the Phoenix Art Museum's annual "PhxArt Project: CityScape" exhibition. Her public art installation "El nuevo colosso" (see Fig. 6.1) featured three lines from "the New Colossus" (a poem displayed on the Statue of Liberty) that had been translated into Spanish by three different members of her family. Displayed at the CityScape outdoor mall, one of downtown Phoenix's most visited sites, the piece interjected a powerful message of solidarity towards its Latinx population amidst anti-immigrant sentiments that dominated political and public discourse in Arizona during this time.

Fig. 6.1. *El nuevo colosso* (2018) featured three lines from "the New Colossus," a poem displayed on the Statue of Liberty, translated into Spanish by three different members of her family. Courtesy of Sam Fresquez.

Melissa Dunmore (Poet, Performing Artist) (b. 1989)

Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Melissa Dunmore is a writer, poet, and performing artist who uses her artistic production to express her identity and experiences as a Black and Boricua (Puerto Rican) woman. Her poetry addresses topics of multiculturalism, bilingualism, and diaspora as well as women's rights and empowerment. Dunmore commented on her source of inspiration in an interview with *La Voz Arizona* by saying, "Escribo por todo lo que siento, por ser mujer, por alegría, tristeza, por ser una sobrevivienta a muchas cosas, por ese poder que existe dentro de mí (I write for everything I feel, for being a woman, for happiness, for sadness, for having been a survivor of many things, for that power that exists inside of me [my translation])" (Limón).

Dunmore is a first-generation college graduate who received a Bachelors of Arts degree in Human Communication from Arizona State University in 2011 and a Masters of Arts in Social Justice and Community Organizing from Prescott College in 2019. She is an active community leader and advocate for the Afro–Latinx community and serves as producer and communications manager for Mujeres del Sol, a local collective dedicated to representing women and girls in the arts. Her work is a testament to Phoenix's vibrant artistic community; as she affirmed in an interview with *Phoenix New Times*: "I can't tell you how many times I've heard people, over the years, say that Phoenix has no culture. That is absurd! There is culture all around us -- it's in the very soil. It's in our bodegas, street names, tribal lands" (Bartkowski). Active in the downtown Phoenix art scene for nearly a decade, Dunmore has been an enormous proponent for a more diverse and

inclusive creative community, stating “I'm a firm believer that if you don't see your culture represented then you, yourself, need to challenge the status quo - be that change you want to see” (Bartowski).

Her bilingual poetry has been published in *Mujeres de Maiz*, *Fem Static*, and *St. Sucia*, an international Latinx feminist zine. Her poems “Black She,” “Summer Story,” “Memories like Mammaries,” and “Black Death” were included in the *Songs of Yemaya: Stories of Black Womanhood* (2015) and *Black Lives Have Always Mattered: A Collection of Essays, Poems, and Personal Narratives* (2017) anthologies, respectively. She has performed at local spoken word/storytelling events including *The Storyline* at Changing Hands Bookstore, *Barflies* at Valley Bar, and the inaugural installment of *The Whole Story,* an event held at Phoenix Art Museum dedicated to the telling of Black narratives. In 2018, her poem “Forgetting Femininity” was featured in *You Racist, Sexist Bigot*, a documentary filmed in Arizona that sheds light on discrimination and intolerance in the United States.

Fig. 6.2. *Melissa Dunmore*, Photograph. Courtesy of Melissa Dunmore.

Diana Calderon (Interdisciplinary Artist and Educator (b. 1981)

Throughout her career, Diana Calderon has taken an interdisciplinary approach to her artistic practice by utilizing a broad variety of methods and medias, including visual and sculptural art, muralism, print and bookmaking, installation work, and performance. Her creative work is the expression of the diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic influences that have marked her own personal identity as a product of the Borderlands, exploring the reciprocity between tradition/modernity, individual/collective, as well as artist/viewer.

Born in Chihuahua, Mexico and raised between El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Calderon moved to Phoenix in 2004. In 2008, she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from The Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State

University and later studied Printmaking at the University of Dallas and the University of Georgia Summer Abroad Program in Cortona, Italy. In 2018, she was the recipient of the prestigious Guadalajara/Phoenix Artist Residency, where she had the opportunity to live, work, and exhibit at PAOS GDL, a non-profit arts organization housed in the former home of Modernist muralist José Clemente Orozco. She has worked extensively as an art educator and coordinator for almost a decade and is currently the manager of the Colors of La Comunidad mural project alongside founder La Morena.

Calderon has been very open about her struggles growing up in the United States as an immigrant. Recently, the artist has reclaimed her transborder identity as being "de aquí y allá (from here and from there)" as opposed to the common expression "ni de aquí ni de allá (neither from here nor there)" (Creative Mornings). This fluid transborder/transnational identity permeates her body of work, as many of her pieces reflect a hybrid blend of Mexican and American cultural influences, media, and methods. Her recent "Verbo Transitivo: Transitive Verb" (2018–2020) (see Fig. 6.3) project crossed physical and imagined borders, consisting of four performance variations exhibited in Guadalajara, Mexico and Phoenix, Arizona. In it, the artist incorporated printmaking and bookmaking with performance art (in live and video form). By combining familiar objects and textiles given to her by her father and grandmother with the art of sewing, the site-specific performances are representative of the artist's own personal journey to self-discovery.

Fig .6.3. *Verbo Transitivo No. 4.* A photograph from Calderon's performance art "Verbo Transitivo: Transitive Verb" series, version No. 4. This exhibition was held at The Stewart during the opening of "Libro," Calderon's Solo Exhibition, an Artlink TAFF grant and solo show recipient of Artlink Inc. Courtesy of Diana Calderon.

Isela Meraz ("Chela Chelinski") (Visual Artist) (b. 1983)

Entirely self-taught, "Chela Chelinski" is an example of the young, emerging Chicanx/Latinx creatives in the city who combine their artistic work with social justice initiatives. Identifying as an "undocuqueer artist," her illustration and portrait work addresses topics that are highly personal, including Chicanx/Latinx LGBTQ identity and sexuality, immigrant rights, and community advocacy.

Originally from Durango, Mexico, Chelinski moved to Phoenix with her family at the age of eight. The artist has been very open about her undocumented status and her struggles as a DACA recipient, as well as the transformative role art has played in what she refers to as her "undocudepression" (Enriquez). Since hosting her first solo exhibition

in Los Angeles in 2015, Chelinski has continued to use her art as a means to empower other Chicanx/Latinx youth, saying, "To me, that [show] was very important because for us, the kids from the hood who dream of studios and dream of having our art displayed somewhere, art has not been something we've been able to possess. It has been something that has saved us from ourselves" (Enriquez).

Her artwork reflects a place-specific identity through its iconography, including the depiction of desert landscapes, cactus, and wildflowers, often fused with corporeal elements in realistic forms. Her artwork has been exhibited at local artspaces, including The Sagrado Galleria, Abe Zucca Gallery, and 19 North Community Space, as well as the Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco and AAA3A in the Bronx, New York. Her illustrations have been published in *Hayden's Ferry Review* and *St. Sucia* as well as two book projects, *Bloom* (2017) by Fernanda Marroquin Gozalo and *Nómada Temporal* (2017) by Luis Ávila. In addition, she has participated in two coloring book projects, "Tlaxcalli- Tortilla, An Ancestral Foods Multilingual Coloring Book" (printed in Nahuatl, Spanish, and English) and the 2020 "Instituto Coloring Book" commemorating the ten year anniversary of SB1070. Chelinski described her project with Instituto as "a reminder of our resilience, fearlessness, love and joy in our community. We shall keep moving forward together fighting for what is right for us and future generations" (Chelinski.art).

Las Chollas Peligrosas

An all-female quintet, "Las Chollas Peligrosas" fuse traditional Latin music genres and instruments with multi-lingual vocals dedicated to female and Chicanx/Latinx community empowerment. Comprised of "a Venezuelana, a Costarricense, a Siciliana, a Chicana and a Mexicana" (Laschollas , "Thank you to Angelica"), their multicultural, borderland identity is reflected both in their body of work and aesthetic, describing themselves as: "Mujeres del desierto weaving Latin styles, Gypsy stylings, songs of the heart and a message for la gente" (Laschollas).

Since the group's founding following the election of President Trump, a period when Arizona was thrust into the forefront of political debates surrounding border security and immigration, its members have been very open about what they aim to achieve through their music. In an interview with *Cronkite News*, Bunnell affirmed: "We knew we wanted to be activists with our music, we knew that we wanted to spotlight social justice causes, and be involved in our community" (Montoya). As a result, the subject matter they address is reflective of Phoenix Chicanx/Latinx cultural identity and the issues that impact them. In the past, they have collaborated with local immigrant rights organizations such as the Florence Project and the Kino Border Initiative. In 2018, the music group was the recipient of the Music Artist Mayor's Arts Award and were featured in the United States tourism's "Visit the USA" series in a video titled "The Sounds of Phoenix, Arizona" (Youtube "Las Chollas Peligrosas"). They have performed at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, the Mesa Arts Center, the Phoenix Art Museum, as well as the San Jose Jazz Festival. The first single of their bilingual debut

album titled “Saguaro” was released in May of 2020, and the music video was filmed in the Sonoran desert.

Fig. 6.4. *Las Chollas Peligrosas*. The photograph was taken on set of their latest single “Saguaro” at a location in the desert just outside Phoenix. Courtesy of Las Chollas Peligrosas.

Just as the artists of the Chicano Art Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, The female art and culture producers listed in this dissertation have opted not to produce “art for art’s sake,” but rather to utilize their creative processes to engage, unite, and empower their communities. Aligning themselves with recent trends in post-Chicanx art, these artists break with traditional notions of essentialized identity categories —be it ethnic, cultural, or sexual— and present innovative perspectives that embrace the dynamic, fluid nature of transborder identities. Together with their continued dedication to social justice issues and fostering community alliances, their artistic expressions exemplify the talent, tenacity, and resilience of generations of Chicanx/Latinx creatives

that came before them. Today, as new population influxes and demographic shifts thrust Phoenix into an unfamiliar phase, new generations of Chicanx/Latinx creatives will no doubt play a significant role in shaping its future. Perhaps, the best is yet to come.

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APPENDIX A

COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

La Morena granted permission via email

Concetta Bondi <cbondi@asu.edu> Thu, Jun 25, 9:08 PM (15 hours ago)
to La

Hi Lucinda!

I would like your permission to use the following murals in my dissertation:

Colibri

I can never give you that sexy face Instagram post, Lamorena_art.

Unlocking your Potential and Freedom,

Humanity Over Hate

Mother Earth,

No More Stolen Sisters

Lucha sin fin/An Endless Fight (my translation)

Detail, *Limpia por la comunidad,*

Was that day the Conquest? Independence?

Thank you so much for allowing me to feature your work. It's a real honor. I look forward to seeing what you have planned next :)
Concetta

La Morena Art 11:54 AM (1 hour ago)
to me

Yes you can thank you! But i'm not sure which are which murals. lol I forget myself.

Annie Lopez granted permission via email to use the images from her work with El Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado (M.A.R.S), "Hispanic Series" (1980s–present day), and the Cyanotype Dress Series (2012–present day). She supplied most of the images herself from her personal collection.

Annie Lopez
to me

Tue, Jun 16, 7:33 PM (9 days ago)

Hello Again:

To pick up where I left off...

"I Allowed People" (2011) is the title of that piece. The piece is made up of images of my younger self. I use my old photos quite often. The statement comes from experiences out in the world. I have had many people guess my ethnicity, without my asking. Some guesses were Polynesian, Syrian, Native American, Italian an even Black Irish. When I tell people I am of Mexican descent, they look disappointed.

"I Look Mexican" (2016) has appeared in three different forms. The first one was Xerography, which is just as it sounds. Its a print from a photocopier (Xerox). I ha also made it into an artist book and the final form is on tamale wrapper paper. I have included the most recent piece. The photo is of my older sister.

"Two Maracas Shy"(2009) is also on tamale wrapper paper. The images are of my Tia Lola (my mom's younger sister) and a woman who was my uncle's girlfrienc found the images in my mother's photo album. She is one of six sisters and the photo album had all of them wearing that dress. My uncle had to get rid of all the photos with the girlfriend when he married someone else.

"Sighting Mexicans in Phoenix" (2011) came from another print that the City of Phoenix owns, titled, "Juanita and Lupe Go Shopping." When SB-1070 happened i 2010, like most Brown people, I was shocked. I was born in Phoenix. My parents were born in Phoenix. My great-grandparents and one grandmother were born ir Arizona. Some of the legislators who supported this bill were not native to Arizona. Some had only been in Arizona since the 1970's, so I wanted to show my famil was in Phoenix before them. The image is my mother (Juanita) and her older sister (Lupe) walking in downtown Phoenix in what I believe is the early 1950s.

More to come!

Annie

4 Attachments



Annie Lopez
to me

Tue, Jun 16, 7:50 PM (9 days ago)

Hi Again Concetta:

For "The Almost Real History of Phoenix" (2007):

"The First White Woman" and "Joe and Greta" are attached. I couldn't find a digital image of "Ida and Ray." Sorry.

The dress series doesn't really have a title. The first dress I made was 2012. I have attached the following:

"Naturalized Citizens" (2013). The images are of my maternal grandparents' file from the INS. It took the Freedom of Information Act for me to get copies. These were the grandparents I grew up with.

"Favorite Things" (2016) My actual favorite things. I saved the newspaper clippings and sports programs. I found the menu in my father's underwear drawer when he was sent to Hospice. It was a place he took us to after church if we were good.

"I Never Learned Spanish" (2013). I never did. I tried and failed at it. I have many textbooks and dictionaries to help me with words and phrases to use in my artwork.

I have also attached written permission for you to use the images the Phoenix Art Museum owns.

If you can think of any other questions, or I forgot something, just let me know!

Annie

The Phoenix Art Museum holds the copyright permissions for Annie Lopez's "The "Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" (2007). Below is the permission to reproduce the images in this dissertation from Adriana Millnic Fanning, Digital Asset Manager of the Phoenix Art Museum as well as the artist's herself.

June 14, 2020

To The Phoenix Art Museum:

I give my permission for the use of images of my artwork from the series, "The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix," which is owned by the Phoenix Art Museum, to Concetta Bondi, for her dissertation.

If you have any questions, please contact me at lopez.annie@cox.net.
Thank you!

Annie Lopez

Milinic Fanning, Adriana
to me

Thu, Jun 18, 9:21 AM (7 days ago)

Hi Concetta,

That is all from our end. Please find the images via the Dropbox link below.

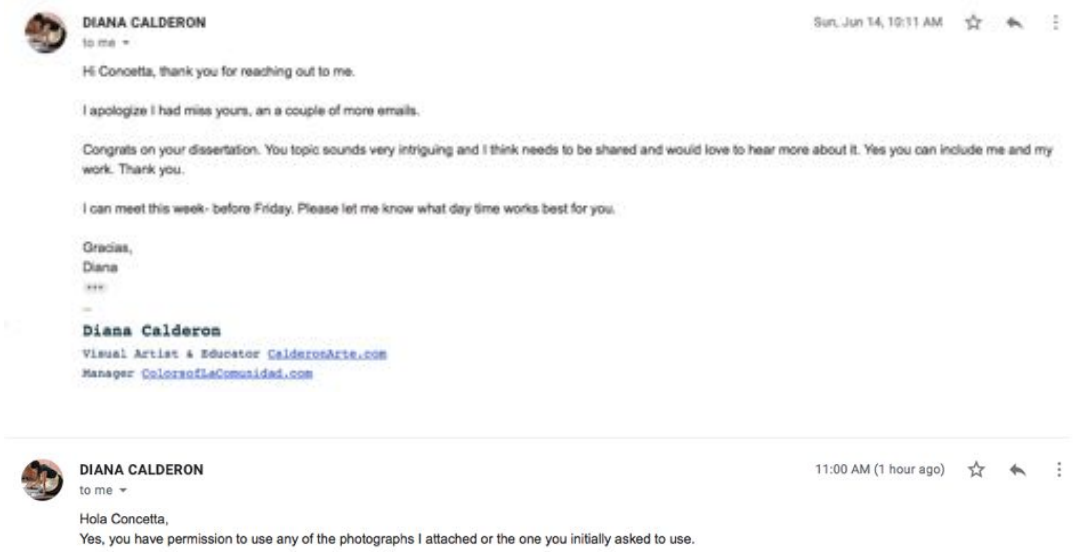
Please make sure that the images are credited in the following style:

Annie Lopez, *The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix*, 2007. Cyanotype. Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds provided by Eva and Eric Jungerman Family Endowment.

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uo4f4w0tl6ygw2i/AAABL3f_g9EiBUrsqp1l5006a?dl=0

Best,
Adriana

Diana Calderon granted permission via email



DIANA CALDERON Sun, Jun 14, 10:11 AM

to me

Hi Concetta, thank you for reaching out to me.

I apologize I had miss yours, an a couple of more emails.

Congrats on your dissertation. You topic sounds very intriguing and I think needs to be shared and would love to hear more about it. Yes you can include me and my work. Thank you.

I can meet this week- before Friday. Please let me know what day time works best for you.

Gracias,
Diana

Diana Calderon
Visual Artist & Educator CalderonArte.com
Manager ColorsofLaComunidad.com

DIANA CALDERON 11:00 AM (1 hour ago)

to me

Hola Concetta,
Yes, you have permission to use any of the photographs I attached or the one you initially asked to use.

Melissa Dunmore granted permission via email

Concetta, thank you ever so much for considering me worthy of inclusion in your project!

Gratefully yours,

Melissa Dunmore
melissa.dunmore@gmail.com
480.567.5391

"Like wildflowers; You must allow yourself to grow in all the places people thought you never would." -E.V.

Las Chollas Peligrosas granted permission via email

Concetta Bondi <cbondi@asu.edu> Tue, Jul 14, 2:37 PM (22 hours ago)
to Las

Hey Chollas!

Could I please have your permission to use this image from your Instagram in my dissertation? It will be included in your biography section.

Thanks in advance,

Concetta

Las Chollas Peligrosas Tue, Jul 14, 4:39 PM (20 hours ago)
to me

Hi, Concetta!

Thanks for your patience! The article all looks correct. As I had mentioned over the phone, you are welcome to use that pic, as well.

We're happy to be included in your dissertation!

Hope to connect again in the future!

Best to you,
Andria