Postethnicity and Antiglobalization in Chicana/o Science Fiction: Ernest Hogan's *Smoking Mirror Blues*, and Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148*

ELSA DEL CAMPO RAMÍREZ, University of Nebrija

The victory of now president Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election under the slogan "Making America Great Again" soon evidenced a breach in the collective shadow of the US national identity. A term first coined by psychoanalyst Karl G. Jung, the shadow is described as the personification of "everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself on him directly or indirectly for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies."[1] Through his frequent and outspoken remarks on issues related to race, sex, and gender, not only has the current leader of the American nation unleashed previously more concealed (but nonetheless real) illustrations of racism, sexism and homophobia; he has also articulated an outward and relentless culture of ethnocentrism and xenophobia, and most worrisome, he has sanctioned the whole nation to be racist, sexist, and homophobic, too. The epitome of ethnonationalism thus gives "permission for the Shadow, within each individual, to express itself […] The Trickster has led the masses into a frenzy; people are expressing their ugly and hateful Shadow."[2]

In his 2011 article "American Exceptionalism and the Battle for the Presidency," Jerome Karabel already signaled that this trend towards white, hegemonic dominance quickly escalated after the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon by Al Qaeda in 2001, urging popular opinion to claim that not only is the US different, but also superior to other countries; a proclamation which, in turn, seems to have practically become a required manifesto for American politicians.[3] In fact, Ana Mª Manzanas and Jesus Benito, in their introduction to *Cities, Borders and Spaces in*

Intercultural American Literature and Film, claim that the so-called new spatial turn of American exceptionalism has always existed embodied in the morphologies that have delineated space in American history and culture.[4] Now America's apparent sense of superiority and drive towards exclusionism have been perfectly exemplified in Trump's insistence and promise of erecting a US-Mexico wall, as Goyal perceptively notes: "Making America great, then, presumably not only involves racist nostalgia but also an imperial platform—an odd amalgam of isolationism (America First) and unchecked aggression."[5]

The resurgence of a white, heteronormative nationalism reflected in Trump's ascendancy to power and effectively symbolized in the building of a great wall along the Southern Border proves the necessity of a transnational counter response that both illuminates and challenges this trend towards exceptionalism and white supremacy. Yet perhaps the traditional approach of transnational studies, with a preference for objects of study that traverse the traditional nation-state borders, may prove unsatisfactory when facing a social and political reality still delimited by national boundaries.

During this decade a new, antiglobalist movement, xenophobic and racist, has been erected to satisfy the demands of a right-wing populism which conceives of the deterioration of the nation-state as reducing the rights of native (white) citizens.[6] Hence, in a world marked by a "global economy defined increasingly through the mediation of places where cultural and economic qualities are hardwired for connectivity,"[7] antiglobalism, though itself deriving from a transnational scope,[8] refuses to differentiate between the two main aspects that globalization seems to encompass: one cultural, the other economic. As Johannes Voelz claims: "Antiglobalists, in other words, have tied the critique of economic globalization to xenophobia, racism, and a disdain for global elites, and have thus conceptualized economic and cultural globalization as hanging together [...]. It is as if they [antiglobalists] offered cultural antiglobalism as a solution to the problems caused by global capitalism."[9] Ultimately the Age of Trump has verified the existence in the United States of a dualism between the notions of nation and transnation. Thus whereas the expansion of a global capitalism appears to deterritorialize and reterritorialize seemingly outdated national borders, still Trump's rise to power, and the resurrection of supremacist nationalism and the antiglobalist discourse which has come with it, "should make it apparent that American Studies needs to be able to provide explanations of what goes on inside the United States,"[10] at a nation-state level as well.

Concurrently, it might be necessary to address how this simultaneously transnational/state-national dichotomy affects notions of identity on both sides of the territorial border. As stated by Timothy Oakes, the importance of geography as a shaping force in notions of identity and socio-political issues, though previously addressed in literature, was not properly tackled until a few decades ago, in what later were to become spatial studies.[11] Among other things, spatial studies must necessarily

undertake the task of uncovering the obstacles to shaping one's identity in a place that, because of globalization, seems no longer confined by spatial borders, a place whose cultural projections seem no longer constricted by territorial limits. Not only that, the kind of narrative with which to articulate this discourse may also need revision. Marko Juvan claimed that, up until recently, the influence of spatial notions on biographical and socio-cultural developments had been construed within the dominant historical narrative.[12] In this respect, however, in his 1991 *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson had already signaled a decline or impasse in the historicity "in our own time,"[13] stating that the traditional features of the novel, so intricately devoted to a hegemonic historicity, had been transferred to a different genre, that of science fiction, which could better answer to the new transnational panorama. In other words, science fiction could surpass traditional fictional limitations by offering a discourse able to reflect on our current global situation.

In the aftermath of the postmodern turn, the genre of science fiction seems to have overtaken the role previously ascribed to a now arguably obsolete historical narrative whose alleged impartiality is now met with, at the very least, skepticism. This generic switch might offer some more complex and intricate explanations for this transnational panorama whose dynamics expand beyond, but at the same time are constricted by bordered entities, creating a linkage between a transnational reality and its nation-state container. In other words: science fiction opens the way for a perspective of the world unrestricted by nation-state frontiers while at the same time attached to what goes on inside these borders. This dual perception of a (trans)national reality that science fiction echoes might prove incredibly convenient when attempting to apprehend the antiglobalist shift that currently permeates the US political scene, particularly after Donald Trump's rise to power.

In this light, the field of science fiction might provide scholars with an enriching repository, as it portrays alternative transnational realities where long-established boundaries are crossed or removed, and new conceptualizations of space and the socio-political structures attached to it emerge, as Malisa Kurtz has pointed out when emphasizing "the promises and potentials of utilizing [this] genre as a critical tool in transnational contexts."[14] By portraying an alternative reality which encourages the reader to identify and reconsider the *status quo*, science fiction thus exposes the constructedness of history, which might in part justify its recent popularity among racial and sexual minorities in the US.[15] Unsurprisingly, the consequences entailed by globalization over ethnic and racialized groups have also been widely and elaborately explored in this literary genre, as exemplified (though not with the same results) by the cyberpunk novel *Smoking Mirror Blues* (2001), by Ernest Hogan, and the futuristic social narrative *Lunar Braceros 2125-1248* (2009), by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita.

Ernest Hogan's *Smoking Mirror Blues* begins when virtual reality games developer, Alberto (Beto) Orozco, resuscitates an Aztec God via artificial intelligence. Taking advantage of his new form, the trickster God, Tezcatlipoca (or Smokey, as he

nicknames himself) manages to possess Beto's body while taking control of the whole mediasphere, which he will try to use to subdue all the human population during the Dead Daze celebration. The novel delves into both the unlimited possibilities and equally boundless dangers of technology, while succinctly reflecting on the changes brought on society by a neoliberal market led by fashion and style. Thus, through its constant focus-shifting plot, this work introduces us to a future postethnic Los Angeles where miscegenation is not only desired and celebrated but most of the times even implemented through cosmetic surgery. In fact, racial mixture is so rooted in society that, occasionally, the different characters populating the story find it hard to distinguish between categories: "Euro? Afro? Asio? Natio? Latio? There was no way to tell—the entire genetic heritage of the human race had come back together in this woman, with the help of modern cosmetic technology."[16]

Interestingly, it soon becomes clear that miscegenation, far from being the result of biological laws and/or cultural integration, is strictly accomplished according to trend patterns. People's physical appearance is not modified as a consequence of migration and/or genetic recombination, but because it is in vogue and ignited by a constant necessity to innovate: "the whole body modification movement has bogged down in recent years since just about everybody has parents with tattoos and pierced noses these days."[17] In fact, at some point, the President of the United States in the story, Malcolm Jones, the first president of African descent to be elected,[18] confesses to have undergone cosmetic surgery in order to become black, which he justifies alluding to his right to pursue happiness as substantiated by the American Dream discourse. Thus, though having been born white, he asserts: "In a more primitive time I would have had to settle for being a euro aficionado of afro culture; but luckily this was America in the throes of the revolution in body modification technology […] I am a trimili manifestation of the American Dream."[19] As opposed to the utopian melting-pot envisioned by intellectuals such as José Vasconcelos, for whom homogeneity also entailed (in theory) the death of prejudice, in *Smoking Mirror Blues* ethnicity is reduced to a commodity. The notion of difference is thus available to everybody, but at the same time, the inequality and racial divisions along which these ethnic differences were previously structured get lost in the process of racial amalgamation.

Hogan's work bears some resemblance to Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton* (initially published as *Triton*, 1976), which depicts a near future setting in which, thanks to technology, human beings can change any aspect of their body and identity that they please, including their race, gender, and sexual orientation. Guy Davidson has suggested that racial and sexual miscegenation in *Triton* mirrors the political and economic situation of the times in which it was published: from Fordist dispensation to mass production, an "increased flexibility of capital [which is] correlated with an increased flexibility in modes of selfhood."[20] In *Smoking Mirror Blues* the postracial world to which Hogan alludes does not directly reflect any economic passage, but it does present commodification as the ultimate consequence of a rampant consumerism which ultimately reveals a fragmented (even schizophrenic) identity.

Hence, both novels might reflect a "hyperbolic extension of contemporary consumer capitalism, in which, it has been claimed, the notion of a core self has been discarded as postmodern subjects deliriously shop for new identities in a 'supermarket of style.'"[21] Still, through the character of Bron, Delany's novel delves into notions of the profound dissatisfaction that arises in the context of a constantly change-seeking society, an aspect which is absent from *Smoking Mirror Blues.*

Smoking Mirror Blues fantasizes about the engulfing of cultural and racial traits by an ever-craving capitalist monster. However, as can be extracted from President Jones's confession, identification with a particular ethnic category is not at all related to notions of tradition, behavior, history, or any other social parameter, but simply to physical appearance; and a sense of belonging can thus be easily obtained through the artificial pigmentation of the skin: "I went through a terrible identity crisis. I just couldn't identify with the euro American culture. My soul, I honestly felt, was afro [...] I wanted to become afro, so I became afro."[22] Following Satya Mohanty, who maintains that identities are theoretical structures that allow us to interpret the world in particular ways,[23] Linda Alcoff defends that identity claims can reveal historical experiences and dynamics of power involving hierarchy, land dispossession, and invasion, in a way that either blames or absolves.[24] The problem, then, when these ethnic identities are blurred and homogenized, is that the narrativization and rhetoric of colonization, expropriation, and subjugation hitherto attached to them also dissolve in the process.

Surprisingly, migration at a global scale appears to have little to do with what the novel describes as "the new recombocultural trimili world,"[25] in the sense that it does not exert any influence on the process of racial mixing. It all seems more like the result of the dictates of an all-controlling fashion industry which offers a whole range of body modification technology the same way one finds different shades of lipstick in a drugstore: "'My eyes are Bradbury Martian Gold,' she said. 'My skin is Calcutta Blackhole. My lips are tattooed Meltdown Fireball. My hair is implanted Meltdown Fireball chromoprotein fibers. And my labret is a customized Outlaw Implants special.'"[26] Still, regardless of the reasons provided for this racial and ethnic convolution, what remains is a celebratory atmosphere of skin and hair colors, a festive proclamation of racial (as well as sexual) variety and multiplicity. Eventually, the marginalization and social inequality historically perpetrated against minority populations is finally neutralized thanks to the beauty and fashion market. As the narrator gleefully declares: "Mexico and America flowing together again, the healing wound cut there by politicians from thousands of miles away, that was the border, alive in the overgrowth of new worlds [...] and the new generation of mestizo recombozoids of all colors. The Cosmic Race that is La Raza was alive and well here in new, improved Mexamérica."[27]

This celebration of races and miscegenation clashes with what the reader finds in Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's *Lunar Braceros 2125-2148*, a work which seems to deglamorize the power of race in an imperialistic world order. It is also true,

however, that, in its way, the story constitutes a border narrative which depicts the fears of hegemonic global capitalism with an emphasis on racialized power. This is an issue which is normally absent from mainstream cyberpunk literature, which, at least until the mid-80's, was often presented from an Anglo-dominant perspective. For this reason, it might not be too bold to insert *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* in the corpus of what Catherine S. Ramírez has referred to as "Chicanafuturism." Understood as a subgenre and a label built on the earlier term "Afrofuturism," Chicanafuturism is aimed at challenging notions of progress, science, and humanism for Chicanas/os and other racial minorities, while exploring how technology in all its aspects affects Mexican Americans' life and culture. Chicanafuturism thus reflects a diasporic experience through its decolonial articulation of *indigenismo*, miscegenation, and endurance.[28] Hence concepts such as alienation, displacement, and even slavery are used "to renarrate the past, present, and future of the African [and Chicana/o] diaspora."[29]

Following the dissolution of the former US and its reshaping through the creation of new nation-states in a fictional twenty-second century, the story portrayed in *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* narrates the adventures and perils faced by a group of Tecos, or waste disposal technicians operating on the surface of the moon. Unfolded through multiple standpoints and voices, the novel is mainly narrated from Lydia's (a Latina woman born in a Reservation in the new state of Cali-Texas) perspective. Through her eyes, the reader accesses a reality marked by forced assimilation, ghettoization, exploitation of minorities, and the neocolonial "globalization" of outer space. Despite the promises offered to build a better life on their homecoming, the recruited team soon learns that the Bracero program they have enrolled in does not contemplate their actual return to Earth. Therefore, after discovering that previous crews have been murdered and buried in toxic waste containers, the group will have to figure out how to survive and get back home.

Sánchez's and Pita's work has been described by Lysa Rivera as an invitation to a "transnational reading of science fiction from a specific geopolitical region (the US/Mexico border) and during [...] the era of multinational capitalism."[30] In fact, *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* sets the reader in a world where frontiers have been reconfigured and reinvented, but not dissolved, thus revealing the fallacy of a border-free globalized planet. This is particularly clear through the image of Cali-Texas, where the main character, Lydia, is from, a new state developed during a convulsive period termed 'The Great Political Restructuring' resulting from the dissolution of the US. At first Cali-Texas makes the reader think that the Chicana/o Movement has trespassed the limits of ideological nationalism—namely, those of a political nation cartographically vindicated through the legendary homeland of Aztlán, to become a truly geographical nation, politically independent: "'Cali-Texas,' the formation of a new political entity that included several of the northern Mexican states (Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Nuevo Leon, Sonora and Baja California), and the former US Southwest states: Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, California, Nevada, as well as Oregon, Washington, Alaska and Hawai'i."[31] Yet the truth is far from that, as the

formation of Cali-Texas emphasizes the fact that nation-states do not actually disappear: they simply evolve and are transformed according to market needs. In fact, not only has the Chicana/o movement failed to achieve its social and economic reform, but the revolutionary ideology supporting it seems to have disappeared, as some ideological structures have lost all their meta-ideologizing[32] potential. This is particularly clear when we look at the 'cholo' category, a label which in the novel has ceased to refer to a young, working-class Latina/o or to a member of a street-gang, and is used now to address any Reslifer[33] in general: "The term [cholo] no longer applied only to the youth, but to the population at large."[34]

In "Caballeros and Indians" B. V. Olguín comments on the mestizo metaphor, characterized by a yearning for indigenismo which originated a type of 'paradise lost' which actually implied more elaborate and complicated negotiations of race, place, and power than have often been acknowledged in the Chicana/o nationalist discourse.[35] However what one finds in this novel is that ethnic nationalism has lost all its indigenist basis, as races are so blurringly blended that they no longer constitute an element of one's cultural and ethnic identity: all of the Reslifers are cholos, meaning no one is a real cholo, as the term has lost all the significance it once came to embody. As Chris Moore has noted: "The word cholo has continued to evolve to the point where it has lost any specific ethnic connotations and now describes this immiserated general population." [36] Not only that, the cholo category, specific to Reslifers or anyone inhabiting the reservations, has instead come to epitomize the *homo sacer*, [37] that is, the classification reserved for the barred and the excluded, or, rather, the classification reserved for those who fall under the 'human waste' category: "There is a clear correlation between 'waste management' and 'population management.' Both prepositions are part of the same reasoning [...] [Reslifers] embody another instance of the *homo sacer*." [38] Accordingly, since the ethnic category has dissolved after (and because of) the conurbation of minorities in the ghettos, Chicanas/os' ideological struggle must, therefore, be reinforced through other elements, or find expression through other means that traverse traditional ethnic parameters.

When the reconfigurations of space on Earth prove unable to satisfy the needs of an ever-growing third-wave capitalism, the consumption chain and the exploitation of the labor force needs to be projected onto other previously unexplored frontiers in space. Thus the novel eventually discloses the ways in which outer colonialism effected on the surface of the moon mirrors the kind of colonialism deployed on the surface of planet Earth: "Both end up creating similar sites for the containment of the undesired or the excrescence of society." [39] Notwithstanding the possibility that the universe is "unending; in other words, it has no borders,"[40] as Pedrito and Guamán learn during one of their lessons, this limitlessness of space does not offer any possibility for change, nor does it anticipate a break with the previous *status quo* to start from scratch. In fact, the limitlessness of space only extends the lack of barriers for colonialism to operate.

The prevalence of colonialism presented in *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* seems to derive from patterns of hierarchization that reinforce and recreate structures of domination and inequality all over again. The idealistic view of a postnational reality where borders merge and people intermingle is constantly refuted: nation-states have not disappeared but evolved and implemented a coercive control over the population, in which the most vulnerable and underprivileged ones are sent to reservations to be exploited. Consumerism has crossed the ultimate spatial frontier and is now exercising its strongest domination on the surface of the moon. What appeared to be a new opportunity to start anew and avoid past mistakes proves to be an opportunity to overfeed the capitalist monster through the implementation of the same patterns of subjugation. This is one of the multiple conclusions drawn by the members of the waste management crew, as can be seen during one of Lydia's and Frank's multiple conversations, in which they sadly realize that the socio-economic stagnation suffered by the population's most underprivileged sectors has become the established order over both the Earth and the moon. When Frank unaffectedly wonders why the conditions on both surfaces should be different, a desolate Lydia can only reply: "Because it's a relatively new space where new forms of relating can develop. And yet we find the same power structure here. Recapitulation."[41]

Yet even though the main characters in *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* cannot break with the patterns of exploitation generated by globalization, they eventually manage to survive by taking advantage of the voids and limitations that a world globally connected has, and this is successfully carried out mainly via technology or, ironically, its lack thereof. That is, it may be true that the rising access to cyberspace has resulted in a sense of empowerment by providing the average citizen with a social network in which to discuss political affairs, unionize, and envision change. It may also be true that this, in turn, may have led to the monopolization of social media by activists and radical organizations alike "to evade detection of their activities, disseminate their ideas, [and even] plan terrorist attacks."[42] However the opposite might also hold true. Such claims can be easily explained through a brief, though nonetheless required, digression.

In Ridley Scott's blockbuster *Body of Lies* (2008), the character of Ed Hoffman, portrayed by Russell Crowe, is, at some point, taken to task and questioned about his lack of progress despite the intensifying of intelligence operations. When explaining why the CIA, notwithstanding its obviously superior technology and surveillance equipment, proves utterly unable to uncover a terrorist organization in Jordan, Hoffman states: "Our enemy has realized that they are fighting guys from the future […] If you live like it's the past, and you behave like it's the past, then guys from the future find it very hard to see you. If you throw away your cell phone, shut down your e-mail, pass all your instructions face-to-face, hand-to-hand, turn your back on technology and just disappear into the crowd."[43] Hoffman is thereby suggesting, if not acknowledging, what Steven Weber has referred to as the dark side of globalization, namely, that progress comes at a price, particularly when it combines with the unipolarity of geopolitics embodied by the US.[44] In a vastly networked world, those

places which stay out of the network but, at the same time, unavoidably linked to it via the interstices of global connectivity become extremely hazardous places,[45] partly because they are concealed, and thus, difficult to expose; and partly because it is impossible for a single superpower, like the US (or the CIA) to monitor what goes on behind every corner of a globally connected reality. This can be detected in *Smoking Mirror Blues*, too, through the appearance of The Earth Angels, a global monotheist terrorist organization which aims at the destruction of religious diversity. When the organization discovers the existence of a god-simulating program designed by Beto's friend, Xochitl, they arrange to steal her nanochip containing all the necessary information in order to create their own version of an AI God. Though it is later known that its members operate with the latest technological implants which make them almost untraceable by the police, and are even sponsored by corporate and government institutions, at first it is believed that their unfindability derives, precisely, from the fact that the organization is able to communicate without having to resort to technology, or, rather, because its members operate on the dark side of the web, which practically makes them invisible to the rest of the world: "The Earth Angels apparently communicate on a global basis. But nobody has been able to crack their network. And they never have any communication equipment on them when they are captured." [46]

Something similar happens when, in *Lunar Braceros 2125-2148*, Lydia recounts her teenage years. While she explains how new labor and student organizations used to function in terms of unionizing, the description she provides somehow resembles that of (other) current terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda. Hence, she describes the configuration of her student organization as a "global movement that synchronized local cells through alternative internet systems that piggybacked clandestinely on the worldwide communication grid."[47] Such an arrangement is what allows them to reach the remotest corners of the globe. In other words, during her university years, Lydia and her fellow students take advantage of the globality of the communication systems and technology to reach any part of the world, using subterranean networks which operate within the cracks of a globalized system. However, when trapped on the surface of the moon, and aware of their lot, the crew soon understands that, even though technology apparently brings about the possibility of communicating with anyone, anywhere, it also entails a darker side in the form of extreme control and surveillance. The implanted transmitters and communicators, and the night-vision ocular implants with which they are equipped function like a camera and/or radio, but, as they later learn: "we did not know that it could also transmit images."[48] In order to survive, the group needs to split from the network, to go back to the face-to-face and hand-to-hand, echoing Hoffman's speech: "At home we'd whisper in the evening with music in the background so that their bugs couldn't pick up what was said or we'd write notes to each other, notes that we would then burn to ensure that no evidence was left behind."[49]

In his "'Presidents of Color,' Globalization, and Social Inequality," Felix Germain emphasizes that the forces of globalization urge political leaders to take decisions that clash with the interests of the "racially underrepresented groups," thereby revealing the multiple faces of a white cultural hegemony that controls and establishes the social relations of a nation.[50] Sánchez and Pita also allude to this cultural hegemony by presenting the moon technicians as dispensable and disposable goods, expendable for the well-being of the white, exceptionalist nation: "The presumptuousness and rebelliousness of the trash techs! When I told them that they could not leave the moon and that we could only offer them the opportunity to re-enlist or await transfer to another colony […] they began to scream obscenities at us […] It was imperative that Cali-Texas lay claim to a huge area of the moon before the Chinese and Europeans discovered what we had found […] Clearly it was necessary for the few to die for the good of the many."[51]

Reslifers and people from the ghettos only participate in the market as consumables, rather than consumers; they contribute to the global economy, but they do not benefit from it. Yet this liminal state is what, ultimately, allows the main characters in *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* to move along the interstices of globalization and develop strategies of survival when they need to disengage from it, which is easy for them because they had never been included in it in the first place. Thus, for instance, in a similar fashion to when Lydia participated in an 'Anarcho Maquis' student union, the tech team also has the ability to become almost untraceable by returning to simple, alternative ways of communication detached from the global network from which it seemed impossible to secede: "Often we communicated in sign language inserting Spanish or caló words here and there."[52]

In *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* special emphasis is given to the duplicitous nature of technology and how it can be implemented for both ethical and morally ambiguous situations, such as those concerning strategies of control and rebellion. Though this is a conclusion which can also be drawn from *Smoking Mirror Blues*, Hogan's novel is not so much concerned with establishing judgment on the ways technological advances can be used for immoral purposes as it is with pondering the role that technology plays in our lives. When two out of the many characters populating this psychedelic story wonder about Smokey's nature, considering the option that he may actually be a real god, one of the alternatives suggested is that Tezcatlipoca may also be the result of artificial intelligence, a suggestion which is replied with a sarcastic: "What's the difference?"[53] That technology is an object of cult, and therefore worshipped as a kind of neo-religious divinity is, thus, ironically implied, and this is not the only instance regarding the desecration of religion that can be found in the novel. In order to stop Tezcatlipoca's mischievous plan, the main characters in the story develop a truncated version of the god-simulating program to create two goddesses to distract the trickster. The deities chosen for such a goal turn out to be Erzulie, a voodoo fertility spirit, and Marilyn Monroe, "the Hollywood manifestation of the sacred virgin, and the trimili connection between eroticism and technology" thus downgrading religion to

iconography or, perhaps, transforming iconolatry into a creed (195). Overall, the novel seems to imply that the *recomboculture* not only involves the decline of racial/ethnic and religious differences but also, and perhaps more importantly, that the eradication of these differences proves the volatility of all meaning previously associated to them. That is, what is celebrated is diversity per se, but a diversity which is devoid of any substance or depth, which lacks both symbolism and emotion. Globalization has not brought integration or acceptance: it has only derived into empty amalgamation, fostered by an ever-growing market which feeds on fashion and cosmetics. In fact, the intricate web of social hierarchies has been utterly disturbed by the urges of the market, up to the point that big companies have started to sponsor street gangs in order to enforce fashion laws, compelling other law-enforcing entities, such as the police, to operate in the shadows: "I guess you are not used to the low-profile that law enforcement has kept around here since corporations have adopted gangs and integrated them into society" (83). *Smoking Mirror Blues* presents a postethnic Los Angeles, but it is a postethnicity lacking in discourse. In that light, President Jones's joyful statement when answering a journalist—"I think it's a very American phenomenon—the creation of a new culture and new traditions out of those that are coming together in Southern California. It's one of those things that makes America great"—leaves a bittersweet taste despite the novel's largely hilarious and light-hearted attitude (25).

In contrast to *Smoking Mirror Blues*' overall humoristic tone, *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* concludes in a rather pessimistic way, emphasizing the unlikeliness of change: "From what we hear, since we've been here in Chinganaza, things have not changed; they've only gotten worse. Yes, that's why we have to go back."[54] As Ana Mª Manzanas and Jesús Benito claim in *Occupying Space in American Literature and Culture*, the novel exemplifies that "there will always be a camp, a reservation, or a site to segregate whoever cannot fit into the latest version of a master map."[55] Lydia's overall conclusion by the end of the story leads to cynicism, as nothing seems to have improved and all struggle seems to have been pointless: "these discursive and agit-prop acts did not lead to much, much less to an insurrection [...] The reservations are still operating with a stranglehold on the working class, mostly of Latinos, African Americans and poor whites and Asians. It's time for a new strategy."[56] Through their analysis, Manzanas and Benito reflect on how Sánchez and Pita portray in their work new transnational corporate powers that eventually reproduce the same hierarchical patterns previously operating on those geographies. What changes is the spatial location, but not the social constructs dominating it, nor the fact that those previously underprivileged and ethnically diverse are still unfit for and in that space: "outer colonialism on the moon parallels internal colonialism on Earth. Both end up creating similar sites for the containment of the undesired or the excrescence of society."[57]

However, Manzanas and Benito's analysis is focused primarily on topographies of space and spatial neocolonization, but not on the solutions glimpsed or even hinted at by the protagonists of the story. Despite its undeniably disheartening tone, there is

still room for hope in the novel since, throughout the narrative, it is possible to sense the sparks for future rebellion. Nevertheless these sparks are not oriented towards outer space and its infinite geography, but appear instead confined to a much smaller scale: that delineated by the boundaries of the body. In Sánchez's and Pita's work, the body becomes a place of rebuttal, as it is only there where the traditional categories of race, nation, and also family are successfully contested. Interestingly, this political body turns out to be a disabled one, too. As a consequence of constant exposure to radiation throughout their long period of labor on the moon, Lydia and Frank discover that neither of them is able to have children. However, echoing a recent interest within Chicana feminist theory for connections between personal, collective, and environmental health,[58] the solution to their sterility, as will soon be seen, becomes a group problem whose solution lies in the entire team, that is, individual healing turns out to be a social process, effective only when shared and carried out by the whole community. Concurrently, Irene Ballester Buigues emphasizes the importance that inhabiting the liminal space of the frontier has for Chicana women, given that Nepantilism[59] between two languages, two ethnicities, two sexualities, etc., is what allows them to be transnational.[60] For Ballester Buigues, this inherent transnationalism also entails a plural subjectivity which is encompassed in the multiplicity of Chicanas' identity. In *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148*, this transnationalism is, in turn, extended to the corporeal frontiers between bodies, disrupting the patterns of hierarchization often associated with them, and this is achieved through the figure of Pedrito.

Pedrito is Lydia's and Gabriel's son, though Gabriel has long been dead by the time the child is conceived and Lydia uses his frozen sperm for the insemination. Simultaneously, Frank is often referred to as Pedrito's real father, and he himself declares: "You are my son, Pedro Ho."[61] For her part, Leticia, though herself in a relationship with Maggie, is the one who carries the child in her womb and gives birth to him: "Maggie and I, we love you dearly […]. Don't forget that I carried you in my womb for 9 months. You are our son as well, in so many ways."[62] When both Frank and Lydia leave Chinganaza to organize insubordination in Cali-Texas, it is their friends Betty and Tom who take care of the child and bring him up. Thus frontiers between bodies and parental responsibilities are constantly overcome and challenged, up to the point of removing any sense of physical or moral possession over the child: "Pedrín, you are as much my son as Frank's, Leticia's, Maggie's, Tom's and Betty's."[63]

The transnational discourse is, in Sánchez and Pita's work, projected towards the frontiers between bodies and the fruit produced by the sum of these bodies becomes, in turn, a powerful counterdiscourse to a world currently witnessing an increasing tendency towards drawing new demarcation lines. Hence, in *Lunar Braceros 2125-2148*, meaningful postethnicity and antiglobalization discourses are arguably articulated, even if they only take place at a body level—which nonetheless still constitutes another marker of status. Through Sánchez's and Pita's work, the reader is able to visualize a hypothetical aftermath of alter-globalization where the ultimate border, the one constituting the liminal space between physical bodies, is finally

debunked, where traditional racial, and familiar—and therefore national, in a sense of belonging—identities are fused through the interaction between and the sharing of ethnically diverse bodies. By trespassing not only the liminality that arises when frontiers are erected but also the roles and implications attached to walls themselves, Sánchez and Pita offer a narrative which ultimately reacts against the reemergence of white antiglobalist supremacism, and its trend towards building new frontiers, as is the case of Trump's promise of a US-Mexico wall. As John Alba Cutler declares, "[c]ontemporary transnational literature illuminates what the wall obscures—the power dynamics of the new border. It offers a powerful counterdiscourse to resurgent nationalism, reimagining the border's history and revising our sense of its present significance."[64]

Though globalization has been praised by some scholars on account of its purported ability to foster competition and increase material prosperity,[65] Germain complains it has also helped sustain a world order where wealth and labor are grounded on racial criteria.[66] Germain's claim potentially updates traditional transnational premises concerning the two kinds of globalization, namely, cultural and economic by observing that these two spheres are intricately intertwined. [67] Hence globalization's apparent trend towards the eradication of racial categorizations, implemented by migration patterns and the de/reterritorialization of previous nation-state borders is utterly deceptive, as it is not real. Even if "blatant racial oppression encounters virulent challenges from outside and within the nation,"[68] racism has not yet been defeated. At best, it has been relegated to the shadow, which would explain its resurgence in the figure of Trump and his drive towards isolationism. It seems as if, for the well-being of third-wave capitalism, the hierarchization of societies, be it according to racial, ethnic, and/or economic parameters, needed to be encouraged rather than challenged, for consumerism radically needs a first world to take over and subdue a third world.

Through different prisms, both *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* and *Smoking Mirror Blues* envisage a postethnic future, though in the latter the intermingling of cultures and races eventually extinguishes any possibility for real insurgence, as the eradication of difference only de-signifies the struggle by dispelling its fundamental purpose. In other words, *Smoking Mirror Blues* seems to imply that the solution resides not in integrating difference, but in eradicating it. Yet transforming racial traits into a commodity does not effectively combat this hierarchization of societies, it simply renovates it. By contrast, through their trespassing of the last frontier (that between bodies), the characters in *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* are not only integrating difference but also dismantling the hierarchical categories ascribed to it by both assuming and seeking a liminal restructuring of national, social, and physical parameters.

Notes

[1] Karl G. Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1980), 284–85.

[2] Samuel Abelow, "Trumpism: The Collective Shadow (A Jungian Analysis of Nationalism in the U.S. and Europe," last modified December 24, 2016. http://www.samuelabelow.com/blog/2016/12/24/trumpism-shadow.

[3] Qtd. in William V. Spanos, "American Exceptionalism in the Post-9/11 Era: The Myth and the Reality," *Symploke* 21, no. 1–2 (2013): 291, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/532826.

[4] Ana Mª Manzanas and Jesús Benito, *Cities, Borders, and Spaces in Intercultural American Literature and Film* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 2.

[5] Yogita Goyal, "Third World Problems," *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies* 44, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 469, https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2017.0025

[6] Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak, *The New Localism: How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism* (Washington D. C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2017), 54.

[7] Katz and Nowak, *New Localism*, 49.

[8] Johannes Voelz, "Transnationalism and Anti Globalism," *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies* 44, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 523, https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2017.0032.

[9] Voelz, "Transnationalism," 524.

[10] Voelz, "Transnationalism," 526.

[11] Timothy Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 3 (1997): 509.

[12] Marko Juvan,"From Spatial Turn to GIS-Mapping of Literary Cultures," *European Review* 23, no.1 (January 2015): 82, http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000568.

[13] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 284.

[14] Malisa Kurtz, "Globalization, Postcolonialism, and Science Fiction: Nomadic Transgressions" (PhD diss., Brock University, 2016), 227.

[15] Catherine S. Ramírez, "Afrofuturism/Chicanafuturism Fictive Kin," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 185-86, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ787998.

[16] Ernest Hogan, *Smoking Mirror Blues* (Oregon: Wordcraft of Oregon, 2001), 105.

[17] Hogan, *Smoking*, 174.

[18] It should be noted that this novel was published in 2001, eight years before former President Barack Obama's election.

[19] Hogan, *Smoking*, 208. Though the meaning of the expression 'trimili' is never explained in the novel, it could be translated as 'fantastic,' 'magnificent,' or even 'divine.'

[20] Guy Davidson, "Sexuality and the Statistical Imaginary in Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton*," in *Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction*, ed. Wendy Gay Person, Veronica Hollinger, and Joan Gordon (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 101.

[21] Davidson, "Sexuality," 102.

[22] Hogan, *Smoking*, 208.

[23] Satya Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 216.

[24] Linda Alcoff, "Against 'Post-Ethnic' Futures," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy, New Series* 18, no. 2 (2004): 105, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsp.2004.0011.

[25] Hogan, *Smoking*, 55.

[26] Hogan, *Smoking*, 106.

[27] Hogan, *Smoking*, 55–56.

[28] Ramírez, "Afrofuturism," 187.

[29] Ramírez, "Afrofuturism," 186.

[30] Lysa Rivera, "Future Histories and Cyborg Labor: Reading Borderlands Science Fiction after NAFTA," In *Science Fiction Criticism: An Anthology of Essential Writings*, ed. Rob Latham (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 531.

[31] Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* (California: Calaca Press Rakuten Kobo Inc., 2009), 2.

[32] Metaideologizing has been described by Chicana scholar Chela Sandoval as the process of appropriating dominant ideological forms through their linguistic signifiers to contest and transform the supremacist ideology attached to the linguistic sign. The deconstruction of the linguistic sign and, consequently, the deconstruction of the ideology attached to it, allows the achievement of a differential consciousness. For more information see Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[33] In the novel, Reslifer is the name given to the surplus population, namely, the underprivileged, the homeless, and all non-white citizens, who have been forcibly confined in reservations camps.

[34] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 105.

[35] B. V. Olguín, "*Caballeros* and Indians: Mexican American Whiteness, Hegemonic Mestizaje, and Ambivalent Indigeneity in Proto-Chicana/o Autobiographical Discourse, 1858–2008,"

MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S. 38, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 32, https://doi.org/10.1093/melus/mls010.

[36] Chris Moore, "The Pleasures of Science Fiction; or, Some Things I Did the Other Day…," *Deletion*, August 30, 2013, par. 11, http://www.deletionscifi.org/episodes/episode-1/the-pleasures-of-science-fiction-or-some-things-i-did-the-other-day/.

[37] Originally envisioned by Roman law as any person banned and excluded from the law (they could be killed with impunity, though not sacrificed), in 1998 Giorgio Agamben, building on Karl Binging's 1920 *Authorization for the Annihilation of Life Unworthy of Being Lived*, reappropriated the term in his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* to refer to that individual who is no longer valuable, and therefore worth neither killing nor saving.

[38] Ana Mª Manzanas, and Jesús Benito, *Occupying Space in American Literature and Culture: Static Heroes, Social Movements and Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 95.

[39] Manzanas and Benito, *Occupying Space*, 94.

[40] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 50.

[41] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 141.

[42] Natana J. DeLong-Bas, "The New Social Media and the Arab Spring," in *Thinking Globally: A Global Studies Reader*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 363.

[43] *Body of Lies*, directed by Ridley Scott (2008; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Videos, 2009), DVD.

[44] Steven Weber, "How Globalization Went Bad," in *Thinking Globally: A Global Studies Reader*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 25.

[45] Weber, "How Globalization Went Bad," 24.

[46] Hogan, *Smoking*, 185.

[47] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 50–51.

[48] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 75.

[49] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 83.

[50] Felix Germain, "'Presidents of Color.' Globalization, and Social Inequality," *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 3 (January 2010): 447, http://www.jstor.org/stble/40648601.

[51] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 155–56.

[52] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 97–98.

[53] Hogan, *Smoking*, 73.

[54] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 49.

[55] Manzanas and Benito, *Occupying Space*, 99.

[56] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 199.

[57] Manzanas and Benito, *Occupying Space*, 94.

[58] Suzanne Bost, *Encarnación: Illness and Body Politics in Chicana Feminist Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 115.

[59] Nepantilism, a term first coined by Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa in her *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), alludes to the double-consciousness or multiplicity of perspectives which arises when inhabiting a liminal space between two (or more) borders, be them physical, cultural, or social.

[64] Irene Ballester Buigues, "Desde el empoderamiento. Imágenes extremas contra el capitalismo patriarcal globalizador: combatividad y resistencia frente al feminicidio mexicano y la desterritorialización chicana," *Arte y políticas de identidad* 3 (2010): 53, http://hdl.handle.net/10201/41528.

[65] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 81.

[66] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 194.

[67] Sánchez and Pita, *Lunar Braceros*, 207.

[68] John Alba Cutler, "The New Border," *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies* 44, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 499, http://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2017.0029.

[69] Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Donald J. Boudreaux, *Globalization* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008).

[70] Germain, "Presidents of Color," 449.

[71] Voelz, "Transnationalism," 525.

[72] Germain, "Presidents of Color," 446.

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