

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: CHANGE IS SOUND: RESISTANCE AND
 ACTIVISM IN QUEER LATINX PUNK
 ROCK

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Change Is Sound explores the roles punk ethos, discourses, and collectivism play in creating resistant practices within queer US Latinx punk communities since the 1970s. My research engages critically with the fields of contemporary Latinx cultural studies and hemispheric queer studies to elucidate new perspectives on the emerging critical category of Latinx, to challenge stagnant narratives of resistance and activism in queer communities of color in the US, and to provide a framework for how resistant practices are being defined and constructed in the present. Furthermore, my study decenters the “white riot” narrative of punk that excludes and erases diversity by categorizing the subculture as a straight, white, male, suburban, middle-class, youth phenomenon. My study achieves this decentering by focusing on intersectional, transnational, and transgenerational subjectivities represented by the contributions of queer Latinx punk artists. By diversifying the perspectives and

experiences represented and highlighting how these artists forge connections to larger histories of resistant practices in queer communities of color in the US and transnationally, I demonstrate how underrepresented populations expand punk's emancipatory potential. Specifically, my research shows how resistant practices such as performative and activist interventions and the creation of online collective revisionist writings present a foundation from which queer Latinx and other marginalized communities negotiate power, hegemony, and resistance within the contemporary context of precarity and oppression under neoliberalism and capitalist globalization.

CHANGE IS SOUND: RESISTANCE AND ACTIVISM IN QUEER LATINX
PUNK ROCK

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Barbara Chayt, my cat Asbury, and my advisor Ryan Long for their unrelenting support.

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Introduction

Why queer Latinx punk rock? How does studying queerness, punk rock, and resistance together contribute to our understanding of those topics and the emerging category of Latinx? How can interdisciplinary and intermedial approaches to the punk rock subculture and its wide range of discourses, practices, spaces, and aesthetics shed new light on our understanding of the relationship between art, resistance, community formation, and contemporary activism within Latinx communities? How do intersectional, transnational, and transgenerational perspectives and experiences decenter the so-called punk canon and expand the emancipatory potential of sociocultural and artistic movements?

This dissertation critically engages these questions and focuses on the relationships among art, resistance, and contemporary activism, specifically in the context of queer Latinx punk rock. Punk rock, in its dissonant and crude sounds, polemical lyrics, shocking images, and irreverent performances, speaks to a wide range of misfits and nonconformists. Its appeal crosses generational and geographical lines and traverses different ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. The potential of punk to serve as a powerful tool of resistance comes not only from its antiauthoritarian and nonconformist attitudes and intentions, but also its inclusivity and accessibility. However, as much as it seeks to reject systematic oppression, in many ways, the dominant narrative of punk reflects and reproduces the racism, cissexism, and homophobia of hegemonic society.

In approaching the topic of queer Latinx punk, I refer to Latinx rock critic Roberto Avant-Mier, who, evoking Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality,¹ writes, "The decentering [of culture] is one that implies that people living on the border (literally and figuratively), people who live in the in-between spaces of culture(s), and people who are more accurately identified by intersectional aspects of their gendered, sexed, raced, and classed identities better define the critical points of inquiry on which scholarship should turn" (17). In regard to my discussion of queer Latinx punk rock, it's necessary to perform a "decentering" of culture and of punk rock to position the marginalized as the focus. More specifically, in this study, the act of decentering is focused on punk itself and on where queer Latinx punks inscribe themselves into punk history through a range of methods and cultural expressions.

This project approaches punk as a subculture which, while bound together by music, is characterized by its multimedia cultural production and its wide range of ideologies, practices, spaces, and communities. I have selected four artists of diverse backgrounds to emphasize the heterogeneity of queer Latinx cultures and identities. Their multimedia work demands an innovative approach to represent what I posit as a queer Latinx punk movement. I also highlight the collaborations among these artists to demonstrate their interconnected methods of resistance and strategies of empowerment to contest shared oppressions and struggles, especially related to ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. These artists include: Alicia "Alice Bag" Armendariz Velásquez, co-founder and

¹ See Crenshaw's foundational text on intersectionality: "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989). In her conclusions, she writes that "... placing those who currently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action" (167).

vocalist of the 1970s foundational Los Angeles band The Bags and an important figure in punk from its early days in the Hollywood scene of the 1970s to the present; Martín “Crudo” Sorrondeguy, a Uruguayan-American queer punk icon from Pilsen, Chicago and a central figure in the Latinx hardcore punk, straight-edge, and queercore scenes of the 1990s to today; Michelle “Todd” Cruz Gonzáles, Xicana punk drummer and lyricist of 1990s radical feminist hardcore band Spitboy; and Cristina “Cristy Road” Carrera, Miami-born, Cuban-American artist and activist whose work spans the last two decades.

My methodologies and research methods reflect the nature of my topic and the artists’ multimedia work in that I take an interdisciplinary and intermedial approach to a broad range of media including narrative, music, visual art, photography, documentary film, and online archival practices. I perform literary and cultural analysis and close readings of their diverse multimedia cultural production while situating them in their cultural and historical contexts and highlighting important interdiscursive and intermedial connections. This is demonstrated, for example, by an analysis of the song and video for “He’s So Sorry” by Alice Bag. I combine close readings of the lyrics and film analysis of the music video, then unpack important references to other songs, music genres, and their respective sociohistorical and cultural contexts through sound, semiotics, and aesthetics. In order to explore the potential of punk as a vehicle for the marginalized, not only to imagine, but to effectively instigate social change, this perspective and approach will enable me to analyze how these artists interrogate and explore both new and old cartographies and routes. These methodological aspects of my project demonstrate the importance of developing innovative approaches to cultural production and the value of

alternative epistemologies in critically engaging with the definition and construction of strategies of resistance in the present.

The Punk Archive

The punk archive is, in many ways, a people's history, largely made up of collections of oral histories, photographs, images of show memorabilia and album artwork published in books, zines, documentaries, and websites by punk historians, musicians, and participants. Many dominant representations of punk rock and its history, however, describe the subcultural movement as being a “white riot,”² predominantly composed of straight, white, Anglo, male, suburban, middle-class youths. These works tend to focus on particular “waves,” movements, artists, or local scenes (McNeill 1996; Blush and Petros 2011; Rollins 1994).

Many scholars, artists, and documentarians have contested the exclusivity of this dominant narrative. Several Latinx and Latin American critics have challenged mainstream origin stories, citing Ritchie Valens's influence on the Ramones and arguing for bands such as Los Saicos of Peru and the Mexican-American band Question Mark and the Mysterians as the first punk rock bands, dating back to the 1960s (Habell-Pallán 2005; Roberto Avant-Mier 2010). In *Rock the Nation* (2010), Avant-Mier goes even further when he attributes some of punk's fashion aesthetic to mid-1970s Latinx culture, identifying the Mexican heritage of the Ramones's artistic director and highlighting transnational solidarity and Latin America's reciprocal influence on punk in The Clash's

² “White Riot” is English punk rock band The Clash's first single, released in 1977 and also featured on their self-titled debut album. It's also the title of the book *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (2011), edited by Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay.

album, *Sandinista!* (1980). The diversity and inclusivity of specific local scenes have been the subject of several studies; however, the more “canonical” publications tend to focus on specific identity groups such as women (Leblanc 1999; Marcus 2010) or ethnic minorities (Duncombe and Tremblay 2011), instead of taking a more interdisciplinary or intersectional approach. Several collections examine the often-overlooked presence of different marginalized groups in punk through interviews (Ensminger 2011, 2012). However, these groups are still separated by rigid identitarian classifications.

Other studies that emphasize an alternative narrative of punk relevant to my project focus on specific artists and situate their subjects within other frameworks and disciplines, such as popular music and Latinx studies (Habell-Pallán and Romero 2002; Habell-Pallán 2005). Several published book chapters focus on the wider genre of Latinx and Latin America rock music with a transnational perspective (Panini Hernández 2004; Zolov 1999; Avant-Mier 2010).

Essential to situating this project within the context of a larger punk archive and to developing a critical position in relation to said archive, are the voices and personal experiences of marginalized individuals and groups within punk. Many punk subjectivities that challenge the “white riot” narrative assert their agency by telling their own stories (Ginoli 2009; Brownstein 2015; Grace and Ozzi 2016). While such texts are invaluable to challenging and diversifying dominant punk narratives, this project goes beyond contributing individual voices and stories to document and provide alternative spaces and trajectories for punk. This is achieved in a threefold manner. First, the new routes and spaces navigated and explored in this project break with the linearity in time and space that characterizes canonical punk texts that have historically and

geographically isolated scenes and movements. Second, the chosen artists offer intersectional, transnational, and transgenerational perspectives to diversify and expand upon more simplistic divisions of identity constructs that are seen in many of the existing alternative punk narratives. Finally, by foregrounding multimedia works in discussions surrounding canonical texts, this project participates in broader discussions surrounding genre in minority literature and culture and its relationship to the canon, in a way that expands its relevance beyond the punk subculture.

Theoretical Framework

This project engages critically with the fields of contemporary Latinx cultural studies and hemispheric queer studies, a framework which supports the content and structure in its interdisciplinarity, non-normativity, fluidity, and precarity. Combining these fields supports the chosen artists' negotiations with important discussions and discourses that disrupt asymmetrical politics of citation, genealogies, language, and knowledge production that create or uphold borders and maintain dominant unilateral hegemonic North-South flows of ideas and practices rather than support a more fluid process. While queer theory is certainly important in emphasizing the incongruities between sex, gender, and desire and engaging with the topics of non-normativity, performativity, and power in the context of approaching non-normative genders and sexualities within Latinx punk, queerness as a destabilizing act tied to resistant practices is fundamental in conceiving queer Latinx punk as an intersectional, transnational, and transgenerational movement.

This study explores the possibilities of punk ethics, discourses, and collectivism to define resistant practices in the present in the context of queer Latinx communities in the US and in the punk subculture. Cultural studies theorists and the field's focus on the ways in which culture creates and transforms human experience, everyday life, social phenomena, and power is helpful in thinking through resistance and agency (Hall, Hebdige, Williams). However, these critics' conception of power as a binary between dominance and submission and leading subcultural theorist Dick Hebdige's definition of resistance as appropriation in the context of youth cultures as exemplified in his pivotal text *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) are somewhat limited in scope. Parting from the classic studies on subcultures within cultural studies, I seek to problematize the narratives that characterize subcultures as being inherently deviant or resistant, or only about style or aesthetics and sensibilities. Rather, in the vein of more recent subcultural theorists such as Sarah Thornton (1995), I approach subcultures as collectivities, a form of distinction but with porous, flexible borders that maintain varying degrees of relationships and ties to the mainstream cultural industry and mass media. At the same time, my focus on intersectional subjectivities challenges fixed or homogeneous narratives of identification within subcultural studies by contributing to our understanding of internal conflicts and power relations.

A postmodern take on resistance that draws from critics such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and José Muñoz offers a more nuanced understanding of power and resistance to complicate the ways in which resistant strategies are read, allowing for more possibilities outside simplistic binary constructions. Fundamental is Foucault's approach, which resists the notion of power as a fixed discourse, theorizing it instead as relational

and deeming “resistance to be an integral component of power relations: resistance is not against power, but imbricated within it” (qtd. in Raby: 161). Paraphrasing Foucault, Rebecca Raby explains:

both dominating and resisting power are fragmented and inconsistent, with each always containing elements of the other (Sharpe et al. 2000); thus resistance is about local struggles that “disrupt institutions and normalization” rather than “the frontal attack on the state led by the One revolutionary subject” (Martin 1988, pp. 9-10). What is opposed is less clear, for power is enacted by all, and people occupy multiple subjectivities, or locations in relations of power. Nor is resistance always progressive or revolutionary (Aggleton 1987; Walkerdine 1990). (161-2)

While he is criticized for a weak theorization of agency and political resistance, Foucault saw resistant potential in “the genealogical unearthing of suppressed knowledges and the disruption of dominant ones” (qtd. in Raby: 162). As Raby writes, Foucault’s theorization of bio-power, “[sought] to ‘reinvent the body by creating new modes of desire and pleasure’ (Best & Kellner 1991, p. 58), or limiting experience (Foucault 1965; Jay 1998) wherein insight can be gained by pushing the body to new experiences as such instances may ‘tear’ the subject, making it ‘other’ than itself, disrupting the self and potentially opening insight into the workings of power” (162). He also proposed in his later works the notion of technologies of the self as having resistant potential, “where individuals create their own identities through ethics and forms of self-constitution” (Best and Kellner 1991, 61; qtd. in Raby: 162). Through such technologies, individuals can question the “naturalness” of their identity and recognize themselves *as* subjects and with resistant agency (Markula 2003; Raby 162). Foucault’s theories on

transgression are also helpful in thinking through resistance and punk in that both are neither positive nor negative, but rather offer a range of possibilities to negotiate the complexities of limits. As scholars who draw heavily on Foucault's theories, both Butler and Muñoz also offer insight on resistance. This takes the form of speech acts and performativity in Butler, or more specifically the gap between speech acts and the resulting conduct, and disidentification in Muñoz.

Lila Abu-Lughod reworks Foucault's famous assertion that "where there is power, there is resistance" exposing the fact that resistance never exists neither outside nor independently of systems of power (Foucault, *History* 95). She argues for the study of resistance as a diagnostic of power relations and historical shifts in power, proposing that "where there is resistance, there is power" (Abu-Lughod 42). Instead of focusing on the "romance" of resistance and resisters, idealistically searching for a signal of the failure of systems of oppression, she writes, "we respect everyday resistance not just by arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resisters but by letting their practices teach us about the complex interworkings of historically changing structures of power" (53). In dealing with complex intersectional subjects as in this project, this perspective on resistance is especially helpful, seeing that the minoritarian subject must negotiate the complex power structures involved in its interaction with the hegemonic majoritarian public sphere that excludes, punishes, and seeks to erase those who do not fit normative categories (Muñoz, *Disidentifications* 4). These perspectives on power, agency, and resistance support this project's contribution to our understanding of resistance and justice in focusing on self-empowerment and the building of critical consciousness to elevate marginalized voices rather than speaking for them.

Other theorists who engage in discussions surrounding queerness from different perspectives inform my approach to queer Latinx punk rock. Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman offer important perspectives on affective modalities and queer temporalities to understand subject formation (Freeman) and present new modes of living not rooted in normative “good life fantasies” (Berlant). Cathy Caruth’s studies on trauma theory also offer useful ways to engage the non-linear temporalities that stem from traumatic experiences, while providing a lens through which to examine the topic of trauma that appears in various works throughout this project. Theories of hemispheric or transnational queer are important foundations to this project including Third World Women of Color feminists (Moraga, Anzaldúa) in their critiques of feminism’s whiteness and heteronormativity. Particularly relevant are their efforts to express the multiple antagonisms that queers of color experience due to race, class, gender, and sexuality, with the aim of promoting a progressive political agenda. These genealogies and Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality serve as a lens to interpret minoritarian politics and understand how intersectional subject positions interact and affect the social. Also significant for this project are their writings on trauma, critical consciousness, collectivity, and solidarity across literal and figurative borders. Other important works that bridge queer and Latinx or Latin America directly confront the intersectional and hemispheric nature of the field and complicate narratives surrounding gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and language in ways that contribute important perspectives to this project. This is demonstrated by Juana María Rodríguez’s text *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (2003) in which she complicates simplistic notions of “Latina/o” identity, Muñoz’s exploration of the ways in which minoritarian subjects or queer people of color negotiate identity in a

majoritarian public sphere in *Disidentifications* (1999), and José Quiroga's *Tropics of Desire: Interventions from Queer Latino America* (2000), which complicates dominant narratives surrounding sexuality in a hemispheric context.

While some critics have rejected the term for being an unpronounceable invented word, impractical, and a bastardization of the Spanish language, “Latinx” is picking up steam amongst artists, activists, journalists, and a younger generation who is embracing the mix of cultures and meanings that the term can denote. “Chicana/o,” “Boricua,” and “Latina/o” all imply ethno-political identification, and “Latinx” is taking that a step further to embrace intersectionality, transnationality, and non-normative identifications. In line with this project’s goal of approaching queer Latinx punk from a hemispheric perspective, theorizations of the term *Latinidad* help to complicate US-centered notions of identity in its embodiment of the many “complexities and contradictions of immigration, (post)(neo)colonialism, race, color, legal status, class, nation, language, and the politics of location” (Rodríguez 10). Rodríguez sheds important light on the complexities of *Latinidad*, which undergoes a rhizomatic process that she deems “Que(e)ring *Latinidad*,” highlighting “‘and’ over ‘is’ as a way to think about differences,” rather than employing the notions of *Latinidad* and queer as umbrella terms (22). In stressing difference and the idea of “excesses of categories,” Rodríguez offers a more nuanced definition of *Latinidad* than the English construct “Latina/o.” *Latinidad* thus helps in theorizing the term “Latinx,” because it disrupts the gender binary in both Spanish and English, allowing space for inclusivity. “Latinx” serves as a gender-neutral alternative to “Latino” and “Latina,” without having to reference the binary as we see in “Latin@.” Instead of the binary, it presents a rupture or destabilizing element that opens

up an in-between space that allows for a range of possibilities. Even visually, the “x” evokes images of crossing, suggesting a transnational, cross-cultural, gender non-binary notion to include the many intersecting identities of Latin American peoples. The “x” also suggests sexual explicitness, as in “XXX.” The placement of the “x” at the end of the term and its pronunciation (Latin-x or Latín-x) associates the term with African American activist Malcolm X. He writes in his autobiography that the “X” serves as a symbol for the African family name he never knew, explaining, “For me, my ‘X’ replaced the white slave master name of ‘Little’ which some blue-eyed devil named Little had imposed upon my paternal forebears” (229). In the context of punk rock, the “x” is a symbol for straight-edge, an ideology prevalent in the subculture that preaches abstinence from drugs and alcohol, coopted from the “x” written on the hands of minors with a permanent marker to prevent underage drinking at music venues. Regarding this study, the term’s multiplicity of meanings, social justice associations, and defiance of categories and norms are useful in thinking about resistance, activism, and politicized positions within punk in establishing collaborative practices, solidarity, and a collective critical consciousness.

The transnationalism implicit in theorizations of the term “Latinx” draws on important histories surrounding civil rights struggles and identity politics in US Latinx communities from the 1960s to the present. Influenced by the worldwide student movements of 1968, Latinx communities felt a sense of urgency to create an identity, a cultural and historical consciousness, and a collective voice through didactic literature and other cultural expressions (Bruce-Novoa 76-8). Marta Caminero-Santangelo offers important perspectives on ethnic identities and “Latino-ness” in exploring the many

possible unifiers of the term, such as language, a shared history of *mestizaje* or colonization, and the transnational experience, whether through literal migration or through inhabiting a figurative borderlands (13-20). In considering the broad range of backgrounds and categories of self-identification of the artists in this project, other critics who approach Latinx cultural studies with a transnationalist lens and explore the notion of the borderlands as a lived experience and a site of literary production for Latinxs offer important perspectives, particularly Gloria Anzaldúa. With an understanding of Chicana identity as fluid, with multiple subject positions, Anzaldúa advocates for a reformulation of the Chicana subject based on indigenous beliefs and histories, progressive sexual politics, and a feminist reworking of the concept of *mestizaje* in her foundational text *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) (Bona and Main 11-12; DeSoto 53-4).

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided in four chapters, each focusing on one artist and a selection of their multimedia works. This organization highlights my interdisciplinary and intermedial approaches and supports this project's methodological aims in highlighting multimedia cultural production while emphasizing the important contributions of each artist. It also privileges their diverse identifications regarding gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, the time frames that their cultural production spans, and that production's sociopolitical and geographical contexts. Dividing the chapters by artist also allows me to analyze several genres simultaneously and highlights overlapping spaces in a way that enables me to challenge linear and contained views of time and space. My project thus explores more fluidly the collaborations among these four artists,

which provide evidence for my conclusion that queer Latinx punk is a collective movement that transcends geographical, temporal, and identitarian borders.

The first chapter focuses on Chicana punk maverick Alicia “Alice Bag” Armendariz Velásquez. I begin with her work because of her pivotal role in founding the first wave of LA punk in the 1970s and her lasting sonic and cultural influence. Another, equally important reason I begin with Alice Bag is that she embodies a transgenerational perspective and represents intergenerational collaboration. The chapter begins with an anecdotal introduction of her performance as “Violence Girl,” a scene depicted at the beginning of her eponymous memoir which establishes important themes throughout my whole project. Her on-stage performance exemplifies the empowerment that she embodies through punk and the transformative potential of punk discourses, ideologies, and practices. It also demonstrates her invocation of ancestral traditions that inform her anger, resistant practices, and consciousness. I then discuss Alice Bag’s memoir, *Violence Girl: From East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage: A Chicana Punk Story* (2011), highlighting her negotiation with her complex minoritarian subjectivities, the centrality of do-it-yourself, or DIY, ideologies and practices to her work and budding critical consciousness, and her performance of violence as a cathartic practice that responds to her own personal and collective traumas.³ The next section looks at her musical cultural production, focusing on her recent solo albums *Alice Bag* (2016) and *Blueprint* (2018). Through close readings and intermedial analysis of song lyrics, sound, and music video, I underscore many important topics in her diverse multimedia cultural expression. Alice

³ A section of this analysis was adapted from Dowman’s chapter titled “Ruidosas to the Front: Alice Bag and the Construction of Violence Girl” in *Latina Outsiders* (2019).

Bag responds to cisheteronormative and neoliberal capitalist notions of time as exemplified by her critical response to ageism. Her work offers important counternarratives that expose the fallacies and silences of dominant historical narratives about people of color. She also establishes significant intersectional, transnational, and transhistorical connections with resistant practices over space and time. Through song and music video, she promotes queer utopian imaginings of the present state of political turmoil and the rise of authoritarianism in the US. She also engages in critical intermedial dialogues with music genres and the discourses surrounding histories of specific sounds. Lastly, I conclude with an analysis of Alice Bag's blog and her "Women in L.A. Punk Archives," to emphasize the important alternative archival practices in which she engages and highlight her transformation of punk ethics and discourses to her growing interest in education.

Chapter II presents Uruguayan-American queer punk icon Martín "Crudo" Sorrondeguy, and it begins with a reading of a powerful performance of his 1990s Latinx hardcore punk band Los Crudos. Los Crudos's unifying call to arms establishes the ability of Latinx punk to negotiate the antiestablishment and nonconformist attitudes, aesthetics, and practices of the punk subculture as well as to make visible the complexities of a scene that engages in complex discussions about hemispheric politics and histories that affect Latin Americans and US Latinxs. Through an analysis of his documentary, *Beyond the Screams/Más Allá de los Gritos: A Latino Hardcore Punk Documentary* (1998), his work as the vocalist of Los Crudos and queercore band Limp Wrist, a selection of his graphic artwork for those bands, and several photographs from his collections *Get Shot: A Visual Diary, 1985-2012* (2012) and *En busca de algo más*

(2015), this chapter highlights many of the important aspects of Martín's work that establish queer Latinx punk as a movement that I will outline here.⁴ His work presents a clear counternarrative to the mainstream "white riot" narrative of punk, dismantling and moving away from these limiting hegemonic identitarian representations by offering intersectional and transnational perspectives. His work also places Latin America and Latinx in dialogue and promotes cross-cultural hemispheric solidarity and the building of critical consciousness through an awareness of shared oppressions, contributing to our hemispheric understanding of queer Latinx punk. I also highlight several important collaborative endeavors, such as the band "The Shhh" in which he performs as his drag alter ego "Garlika Stanx" alongside Alice Bag; and Desafinados, an event that Sorrondeguy organized in celebration of Los Crudos's 25th anniversary and to pay homage to Chicago's history of Latinx punk. All of the artists in this study participated in Desafinados.

Chapter III features the multimedia works of Xicana punk Michelle "Todd" Cruz Gonzáles, including her memoir *The Spitboy Rule: Tales of a Xicana in a Female Punk Band* (2016) and her work as the drummer and lyricist for 1990s all-female feminist hardcore punk band Spitboy. The chapter begins with the memorable on-stage encounter of Spitboy with exclusionary riot grrrl politics, thus initiating an analysis of how her work challenges white, middle-class feminist punk and the broader "white riot" narrative by promoting intersectional and transnational interventions into punk feminisms. The next section features a more in-depth analysis of her memoir *The Spitboy Rule*, in which I

⁴ Some of the analysis in this chapter on Martín Sorrondeguy's documentary *Beyond the Screams* and his work as the vocalist in Los Crudos and Limp Wrist has been adapted from Dowman's master's thesis titled *Mapeando la Cultura Kruda: Hip-hop, punk rock y performance queer latino contemporáneo* (2013).

highlight her negotiation of her conflicting subject positions within her family and in the punk scene, the importance of DIY and collaborative practices within the band, and the ways in which they confront sexism, misogyny, and other oppressive discourses. The next section delves into Cruz Gonzáles's musical contributions through Spitboy, highlighting feminist themes such as gendered violence, critiques of male privilege, and experiences of collective trauma. This chapter contributes important intersectional and transnational perspectives on the building of a critical consciousness through a reconceptualization of punk feminisms. It also highlights meaningful collaborations between Spitboy and Los Crudos and draws connections between Cruz Gonzáles's punk education and her current pedagogical work.

Chapter IV establishes the importance of queer Cuban-American artist and activist Cristina "Cristy Road" Carrera in establishing these artists as a cohesive movement that transcends generational differences within punk and diversifies the ethnic identifications associated with queer Latinx punk. The chapter begins with an analysis of her mixed media series *SOBREVIVIR: Queer Punx of Color* (2015), which features a portrait of Martín Crudo along with two other portraits of influential people of color in punk. This series establishes the significance of practices of queer worldmaking in Road's works by privileging nonnormative subjectivities, challenging cisheteronormative patriarchal categories and structures, intervening into dominant representations of punk, and recognizing the importance of survival, healing, and resilience. The next section presents an analysis of Road's three illustrated memoirs, *Indestructible* (2006), *Bad Habits: A Love Story* (2008), and *Spit and Passion* (2012), which all illustrate finding self-empowerment through punk by questioning, unlearning, and signifying cultural

discourses dictated by neoliberal capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy, discourses that perpetrate oppression and injustice.⁵ Finally, I present a performative reading of her deck *The Next World Tarot* (2017) to highlight how the work incorporates intersectional, transnational, and queer perspectives and traditions to draw meaningful connections with alternative spiritual practices and epistemologies. I also highlight the significant collaboration in which she participated with Alice Bag, illustrating the cover of Alice Bag's second memoir, *Pipe Bomb for the Soul* (2015). By featuring Cristy Road in the last chapter, I emphasize the new and innovative forms in which she presents and creatively shares the practice of actively building a collective critical consciousness through punk. While all the artists contribute to this consciousness in their own unique ways, the chapter about Road details how Latinx punk promotes a shared utopian vision for self-love, queer worldmaking, and justice.

While the conclusion reiterates the connections and divergences among these four artists and their multimedia works, it also points towards the future directions of a queer Latinx punk movement. All of the artists studied in this project engage in important discussions, critiques, and collaborations, but they also all participate in a range of pedagogical practices. Alice Bag's memoir *Pipe Bomb for the Soul* narrates the time she spent learning about education while living among Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Martín Crudo engages in alternative educational practices through organizing events and educating through documentary. Michelle Cruz Gonzáles's active work as a community college professor demonstrates her professional commitment to education. Lastly, my

⁵ A more in-depth analysis of Cristy C. Road's graphic novel memoir *Spit and Passion* can be found in Dowman (2013).

short analysis of the “Teacher” card in Cristy Road’s *The Next World Tarot* illustrates the importance of education in Road’s queer utopian vision. This emphasis on pedagogy in queer Latinx punk is especially important to me as a researcher and educator myself, since my own background in the punk rock subculture contributed to my passion for learning and developing a critical consciousness that has led me to embark on this dissertation project. The artists in this study as representative of a wider movement of queer Latinx punk demonstrate the subculture’s ability to bring punk off the traditional stage and into other spaces, instigating change in future generations to unite in a common goal for justice.

Chapter I: Alicia “Alice Bag” Armendariz Velásquez

Introduction

“I am in my element, *en mi mero mole*. There is so much energy coursing through my body that surely I am dangerous to touch” (Bag, *Violence* 7). Frenetic and wild, her movements and presence dominate the stage as if she were in a fighting ring; her intensity flows dangerously like an electric current. Then an offensive gesture from a distracting figure in the audience diverts her trance. She snatches the so-called “gnat’s” glasses off his face, and as he becomes subsumed in the sea of punks, she smashes them under the weight of her high heels. “How did I come to unleash the wrath of kali⁶ upon the world of punk?,” she asks. “The answer to that question lies way back in my childhood and perhaps even before that, because the seeds of Violence Girl were sown way before I was even born” (8). This emotive, visceral scene sets the stage for the opening of punk idol Alice Bag’s memoir with a first-person account of her experience onstage as the lead singer of The Bags. Theatrical, chaotic, and exaggerated, the line between spectators and the band is blurred. She moves her body wildly, completely consumed by her performance as Violence Girl.

The loaded historical, mythological, and religious image of the Violence Girl that summons the Black Hindu goddess Kali to her punk consciousness in the opening of *Violence Girl: From East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage: A Chicana Punk Story* (2011) simultaneously captures the rage, precarity, and power embodied by the iconic figure of

⁶ Kali appears in lowercase in *Violence Girl*.

Alice Bag. Through *Violence Girl*, Alice Bag simultaneously embodies competing discourses of gender, sexuality, religion, history, and tradition. Imbued with a multiplicity of overlapping and intersecting signifiers, *Violence Girl* epitomizes the punk performance of Alice Bag, a commanding and infectious force whose precarity teeters on the edge of total rebellion. Alice Bag's personification and embodiment of the figure of *Violence Girl* in this song aptly sets the stage for my discussion of the politics of resistance in queer Latinx punk rock, her chaotic on-stage punk performance and her invocation of ancestral wrath as crucial elements of her resistant practices and consciousness. She also represents both a unique voice and an example of intergenerational collaboration within punk for this project, which elucidates the relationship between art, resistance, and contemporary activism.

This chapter is the first of four to approach punk as a subculture expressed through its multimedia cultural production, focusing on the work of the iconic Alice Bag in the context of queer Latinx punk as pivotal in understanding how the chosen artists negotiate their complex subjectivities, contribute to alternative epistemologies, challenge the mainstream "white riot" narrative of punk, and demonstrate the potential of punk as a catalyst for social change. It considers Alice Bag's trans/intergenerational perspective and multimedia contributions to the punk subculture to support this project's goal of mapping new routes and spaces that break with the linearity in time and space that characterizes canonical punk texts that have historically and geographically isolated scenes and movements. Her work also offers intersectional perspectives to diversify more simplistic divisions of identity constructs in many of the existing punk narratives. By foregrounding queer Latinx punk life writing, music, and alternative archiving practices

through Alice Bag, my analysis shows how her works question homogenous narratives of punk and hegemonic identity constructions, tap into broader social and artistic movements and practices to establish transnational and intersectional connections, and represent transformative experiences and influences that contribute to the building of a collective critical consciousness.

I begin with a discussion of Alice Bag's memoir, *Violence Girl*, in which I examine her negotiation with multiple intersectional subjectivities through nicknames and the construction of self, the importance of DIY ideologies and practices, and her performance of symbolic and literal violence. Next, I turn to her music as the vocalist of 1970s LA punk band, The Bags, and in her more recent solo albums *Alice Bag* (2016) and *Blueprint* (2018), in order to focus on topics such as ageism, how to rewrite dominant historical narratives and establish intersectional connections between marginalized experiences of violence over time and space, how to imagine a queer utopia in the context of the current political climate, and how to create critical intermedial dialogues with other musical genres and discourses. Lastly, I present an analysis of Alice Bag's work as a feminist archivist through her "Women in L.A. Punk Archives," a website to which she contributes photos, videos, and interviews she has conducted with important women in the LA punk scene. If Alice Bag hadn't formed The Bags, the punk scene would not be what it is today. Her multimedia work bridges four decades, spans a variety of genres, and speaks to a range of intersectional experiences, which demonstrates how she acts as a rhizomatic fiber that connects the various artists and works that make up the queer Latinx punk movement that I define in this project.

Several theorists whose works inform my analysis in this chapter include José Muñoz and his text *Disidentifications* (1994) and Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995). José Muñoz's writings on resistance are helpful in this chapter's exploration of how Alice Bag's works enact a queer critique of dominant discourses. His text *Disidentifications* deals with the complex negotiation in which minority-identified subjects must engage with dominant ideologies to manage their relationship with historical and systemic trauma and violence. The process of "disidentification" is neither a strategy of assimilation nor a rejection, but rather a third and alternative tactic that allows them to re-signify mainstream cultural codes. While Alice Bag simultaneously inscribes herself in and subverts dominant discourses, disidentification is not only a survival strategy but also one of resistance. Crucial to Alice Bag's contributions to the creation of an evolving critical archive is Jacques Derrida's pivotal text, *Archive Fever*, in which he embarks on a deconstructive analysis of the notion of the archive and archiving practices. He opens this text—originally a lecture given in 1994—with an etymological study of the notion of the archive, tracing it back to the Greek word "arkhē," which means both commencement and commandment. This etymology speaks to the archive's historical connection to government, power, and the law in that it was originally located in a privileged, private space, governed by the archons or the select few that represented the degree of public access. The interplay of public and private space in relation to producing and accessing the archive is important in this chapter's discussion of online archival practices, as demonstrated by Alice Bag's "Women in L.A. Punk Archives."

The Life and Work of Alice Bag

A self-proclaimed “Musician, author, punk feminist, master troublemaker,” Alicia Armendariz Velázquez, better known as “Alice Bag,” is an important figure in punk rock from its early days in the dingy clubs of Hollywood to the present, constantly challenging and redefining what it means to be punk, and challenging sociocultural norms and definitions from every which way. Due to her variegated cultural production and her affinity for storytelling, Alice Bag has made it her mission to contribute to the visibility of queer, women, POC,⁷ and other underrepresented punks. Alice Bag, still then known as Alicia Armendariz, formed The Bags in 1977 with friend Patricia Morrison (Pat Bag). Various other members include Craig Lee of Catholic Discipline and co-author of *Hardcore California: A History of Punk and New Wave* (1983), Terry Graham of psychobilly punk band The Gun Club, and Rob Ritter (Rob Graves) of death rock band 45 Grave.⁸ Despite Alice Bag’s prominent role as a pioneer of the 1970s LA punk scene, The Bags’ material legacy is limited, including one 7” featuring the songs “Survive” and “Babylonian Gorgon” (Dangerhouse Records, 1978); “We Don’t Need the English,” a song included on the *Yes L.A.* compilation album (Dangerhouse Records, 1979) with some of the most legendary bands of that scene including X and The Germs; a two-and-a-half-minute performance on Penelope Spheeris’s legendary LA punk documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization* (1981), which was also released on the film’s soundtrack (Slash Records, 1980); a 7” with one studio demo and two live recordings entitled *Disco’s Dead* (Artfix Records 2003); and a handful of other shoddy audio and video

⁷ POC refers to people of color.

⁸ For a more complete band biography, see artfixrecords.com.

recordings of live shows, some of which are now preserved on the internet on sites such as YouTube and Bandcamp. In 2007, Artfix Records released a full-length album of twenty songs from alternative recording formats including rehearsals, live performances, demos, and alternative takes titled *All Bagged Up: The Collected Works 1977-1980*.

Alice Bag is an iconic figure not only in the queer Latinx punk community, but also in punk's historical archive. A contemporary of other Latinx and Chicanx bands of the time including The Plugz, The Brat, The Zeros, and Los Illegals, among others, The Bags broke up in the early 1980s as the scene started to shift from the colorful group of misfits that made up the first wave to the drastically more homogenous and angry hardcore scene. Notably, Alice Bag never completely left punk behind, singing or playing various instruments in a long succession of bands and collaborating on a variety of creative musical projects. In the 1980s, she played in: the satirical deathrock band Castration Squad with Phranc of Nervous Gender and Catholic Discipline and Dinah Cancer; the post-punk funk band Cambridge Apostles; the rock bands The Boneheads and Alarma, and retro-soul group Swingset. In the 1990s she performed: in the queer pop-punk band Cholita! The Female Menudo⁹ with black queercore icon Vaginal Davis; as backup for El Vez¹⁰ and the Elvettes or "The Mexican Elvis," who started his career in the Latinx punk band The Zeros in late 1970s LA;¹¹ with feminist folk acoustic groups Las Tres with fellow Chicanx Teresa Covarrubias of The Brat and Goddess 13; and with punk bands Stay at Home Bomb and the She-Riffs.

⁹ Cholita! The Female Menudo was formed in 1987, with Fertile LaToya Jackson, an alter-ego/visual representation created by Vaginal Davis. They released several music videos.

¹⁰ Robert López, better known as "El Vez," is a Mexican American musician who uses satire and humor to express his revolutionary views. Alice Bag's daughter also performed backup with El Vez.

Alice Bag is certainly a legend in LA punk history, but her legacy and relevancy are not stuck in a jaded or nostalgic past. As well as being an iconic musician, Alice Bag is an educator, an active blogger, a feminist archivist, and a published author. In addition to her musical projects, Alice Bag founded At Home Bomb in the mid-1990s, an all-female community safe space centered around punk rock, and she worked for years as an inner-city bilingual elementary school teacher. Bag published *Violence Girl* in 2011, originally as a blog titled, *The True Life Adventures of Alice Bag*. She is also the author of the self-published *Pipe Bomb for the Soul* (2015), a collection of diary entries documenting her experiences while living in post-revolutionary socialist Nicaragua among Sandinistas during the US backed Contra War in Nicaragua as part of a work study program in 1986. This last work also appears in blog form. Despite decades of making music, she released her self-titled debut album, *Alice Bag*, in June of 2016 on the independent label Don Giovanni Records. On this album, Bag explores diverse themes including rape culture, domestic violence, and her opposition to the corporate takeover of agriculture through her lyrics, while demonstrating her diverse musical influences, from *ranchera* to punk rock. She released her second solo album titled *Blueprint* in 2018, which features collaborations with other punk icons including Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill, Allison Wolfe of Bratmobile, and Martín “Crudo” Sorrondeguy of Los Crudos and Limp Wrist. Alice bag has also constructed an ongoing online archive titled “Women in L.A. Punk Archives” to document the participation of women in the early LA punk scene through interviews.

Despite her influence and legendary reputation in the punk scene and beyond, Alice Bag has yet to receive her due credit in mainstream chronicles of punk history.

Many dominant representations of punk rock and its history describe the subcultural movement as being a “white riot,” predominantly composed of straight, white, male, suburban, middle-class youths. However, Latinx popular culture scholar Michelle Habell-Pallán has cited the participation of Chicane punks Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias of The Brat in contesting the mainstream representation of the 1970s LA punk scene. Her contributions on Alice Bag’s Chicane punk aesthetics, vocal style, and performances are helpful in understanding the impact of Alice Bag’s early influence on punk from a more historical perspective.¹² Several recent publications in the field of sound studies have explored different aspects of Alice Bag’s performances, vocal style, and the punk scene she helped found, including a mapping of Chicane influence on punk history through the “pogo,”¹³ performance of resistance in her recent song “Reign of Fear,”¹⁴ and disruption of Eurocentric musical traditions through her scream.¹⁵ I take a more interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to Alice Bag’s work, looking at how specific resistant narratives and practices contribute to new understandings of resistance in the present-day.

Violence Girl: *A Punk Memoir*

While Alice Bag’s personal involvement in founding the first wave LA punk scene and her participation in the “East LA Renaissance” of the 1970s cannot be underestimated, her personal journey that she narrates in *Violence Girl* as an origin story

¹² See Habell-Pallán (2005, 2011, 2012).

¹³ See Keenan, “Don’t Be Afraid to Pogo!” (2017).

¹⁴ See Keenan, “An Evening with Three Legendary Rebel Women at Le Poisson Rouge” (2017).

¹⁵ See Ríos-Hernández, “If La Llorona Was a Punk Rocker: Detongueing the Off-Key Caos and Screams of Alice Bag” (2017).

of sorts is an important lynchpin in imagining the nonlinear infrastructure and the ideological and aesthetic development of queer Latinx punk. As mentioned above, Alice Bag started chronicling the experiences narrated in *Violence Girl* in a blog in the mid-2000s while teaching bilingual education in Arizona and feeling disconnected from her progressive urban subcultural surroundings in LA. She published *Violence Girl* in book form in 2011, although it retains the journal-like structure and the conversational prose of her blog posts, and it is speckled with photographs from her youth. It's noteworthy that this memoir represents a reflective perspective on Alice Bag's beginnings in punk rock to reflect on the many ways in which punk has contributed to the meaningful aspects of her life as an artist, advocate, and educator. In this section, I highlight how the rebellious and questioning attitudes that spawned from the early LA punk scene challenged and transformed the ideals and everyday choices of Alice Bag and her friends, igniting in them a critical and political consciousness. While the historical time narrated in her memoir is limited, the ideas portrayed transcend temporal bounds, in that she continues to challenge fixed categories and regulatory structures and create new pathways for queer Latinx punks and other minority subjects to engage in innovative processes of knowledge production. The autobiographical work also sets the stage for my discussion of resistant strategies in this project within the broader category of performance. Through her performative construction of self, engagement with punk ideologies, negotiation with violence both on and off the stage, and establishment of transnational mythological connections, Alice's work exemplifies not only how she performs resistance in both small and large ways, but also offers a blueprint for other queer Latinx punks in their journeys and encounters with resistance and social change.

Life Writing: The Genre

Outside of the punk archive, autobiographical writing is particularly important within Latinx communities and other groups living in the literal and/or figurative borderlands. The works explored in this chapter can be classified as “life writing” following Frederick Aldama’s approach, a more flexible and inclusive umbrella term also used by Latinx critics such as Norma E. Cantú and Isabel Durán to describe the occasionally messy and overlapping genres of memoir, autobiography, and *testimonio*. Durán explains how Latinx writers both appropriate and reject the humanist and deconstructionist approaches to autobiography and the self, simultaneously embracing the postmodern project of decentering the universal subject and the possibility of a unified self (163). She emphasizes the importance of life writing to the “divided self,” who she identifies as the immigrant, exile, bicultural, and, at times, bilingual Latinx in the US, in order to “to return to one’s past and to ruminate about one’s roots, to fight forgetfulness, to express the sense of belonging that breathes inside everyday autobiographical expression” (162, 173).

Life writing often disrupts canons and normative literary genealogies with larger historical and political functions based on connecting an individual’s lived experience to a wider collective history. Durán highlights the intrinsically political nature of life writing as a genre, especially by Latinx writers and others of marginalized groups, seeing that historically it has served as a space where silenced voices and repressed ideas can be expressed. Norma Cantú argues that specifically Chicanx and Latinx life writing is by definition different from that of mainstream writers: “[b]ecause it also allows for a discussion of what it means for a people who have traditionally not had the resources or

access to inserting their life story into the national fabric, or into the hegemonic literary canon, life writing explodes the boundaries of the more traditional genres” (312).

Expanding on James Olney’s work in which he differentiates African autobiography from Western works of the genre that feature a Rousseauian portrait of the self to include Latinxs, Durán emphasizes the collective nature of life writing in offering a portrait of a shared group experience.

Latina and Chicana feminist life writing is intrinsically tied to a history of responding to historical, cultural, and ideological oppressions, as well as challenging dominant perceptions surrounding all types of borders, following in the Chicanx and Nuyoricán traditions born out of the civil rights movements of using writing as a tool for resistance to construct an archive of Chicanx and Latinx texts and create and build collective consciousness. In addition to bringing discussions of sexuality to the forefront and expanding upon the understanding of intersectional marginalized identities, Chicana and other POC feminist life writers contribute to a more collective response to shared oppressions. Lourdes Torres explains:

Autobiographical works provide a window into the socially and historically constructed world of a community, and help to illuminate the conditions that its members inhabit and transform. Memoirs, particularly memoirs by women of color who are multiply positioned in complex worlds, provide an alternative to mainstream masculinist conceptions of culture and politics. (cited in Cantú 104n2)

In an exploration of marginal spaces imagined by critics such as bell hooks and seen in texts like Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: La Nueva Mestiza* (1987), and

pan-ethnic feminist anthologies such as *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), edited by Cherrie Moraga and Anzaldúa, these writers use life writing to problematize the relationships among gender, sexual, racial, and cultural identities in a variety of times and places. This archive of Chicanx and Latinx feminist life writing is ever-evolving, in a way similar to what Derrida describes in *Archive Fever*, since the open archive “produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future” (68). Alice Bag’s *Violence Girl* represents an important, more recent contribution to this writing tradition, bridging Latinx and punk narrative discourses in innovative ways and actively providing new perspectives to a shifting archive of Latinx feminist writing and other cultural expression.

The Construction of Self: Punk Nicknames

In *Violence Girl*, Alice Bag narrates her childhood experiences growing up in East LA in a patriarchal Mexican family through a series of vignettes that highlight childhood traumas surrounding domestic abuse and general feelings of social and cultural marginalization. These struggles motivate her search for female empowerment alongside the budding punk rock scene and how she navigates issues of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. She eventually moves to Hollywood and encounters the beginnings of a new revolution: punk rock.

After the visceral opening description of her on-stage performance as Violence Girl, Alice Bag’s memoir returns to her early childhood years and assumes a chronological structure. Born in 1958 in East LA to Mexican immigrant parents, Alice grows up on *pocho* cuisine, movies from the Mexican *Época de Oro*, strict gender roles,

and a healthy dose of Catholic guilt. Battles with poverty, toxic hegemonic masculinity, and domestic violence mark her childhood, and in the socio-politically charged climate of the 1960s and 1970s, she grows increasingly aware of the many intersecting oppressions that lie in her path. Nonetheless, Alice never quite fits into any of society's prescribed or imposed identitarian classifications. She is a misfit, an outsider, and comes to find satisfaction and empowerment through a critical mindset that teaches her to question, challenge, and subvert everything.

Spending summers in Juárez fosters in Alicia, prior to her days as a Bag, a strong sense of pride in her Mexican heritage. The summertime sees an increase in construction jobs for her father, so together with her mother and sister, she takes an annual pilgrimage to visit family in a border town, enjoying *raspadas* and *elote*, free of her father's abuse. Early on, however, she develops a keen awareness of marginality through her encounters with discrimination in the context of 1970s English-only practices in school and the growing racial tensions among activists in the Chicano Movement and the police. Upon arriving at school with no prior knowledge of English, her second-grade teacher Miss Gibbons changes her name from Alicia to Alice, her first personal encounter with the oppressive, assimilationist, long-standing practice of Anglo remonikering. Miss Gibbons chastises the first-generation and immigrant students for not being fluent in English, reprimands those that even whisper in Spanish, and belittles their intelligence based on their lack of English fluency. Practices such as these hinder Alice's potential to learn and grow academically as a child, and she turns to comic books to learn English, with "Archie, Reggie, Betty, and the rest of the Riverdale High gang as her tutors" (Bag,

Violence 38). This didn't help her outsider social standing, however, as these mentors arm her with outdated expressions that further set her apart from her peers.

On August 29, 1970, at age 12, Alice Bag witnesses the Vietnam protests during the Chicano Moratorium in East LA. After a riot breaks out and her father drags her and her sister away from the ensuing violence to follow the events on TV from the safety of the living room, Alice learns of the police killing of Chicano activist and outspoken critic of police brutality, Rubén Salazar. Whereas the impact of this experience elucidates the inescapable fact that she is part of a hated minority group, she is also impressed by the rebellious attitude and revolutionary style of the female Brown Berets, a militant Chicano/a civil rights group founded in the late 1960s to fight racial oppressions.

Alice gains special attention for her "style," in her ninth-grade art class at Garfield High, and she is chosen to design "something cultural" for a mural for a campus building (Bag, *Violence* 98). Her art teacher suggests that she incorporate a pyramid, and Alice naively heads to the library to research Egypt. The committee has something else in mind, however, and upon seeing her design, they casually request that she make it more "Mexican," with a Mexican pyramid and an eagle on a cactus to replace the Sphinx. Alice, confused and angry, turns down the project, rejecting the stereotypical identity being imposed on her as a superficial gesture of the era's focus on multiculturalism (98-9).

To cope with the anger, powerlessness, and insecurity that results from the instability she experiences at home and in wider society, Alice clings to the tenants of individualism and finds outlets in pop culture and creative expression. Mexican wrestling's *Lucha Libre* personalities serve as the role models she never had. Exploring

their good and evil duality helps her confront the challenges of living amidst the instability surrounding everyday violence. This also helps strengthen her identification with the outsider through her affinity for the controversial figure El Indio Ray Mendoza, the *rudo* turned *técnico* indigenous underdog of Mexican wrestling. And from very early on, her first love is music. Despite their economic struggles, Alice's parents encourage her affinity for music in the form of piano lessons. She makes her debut as a professional singer in 1966, recording cartoon theme songs in English and Spanish.

Despite the oppressive nature of her second-grade teacher's act of linguistic imperialism in forcibly changing her name, Alice starts adopting the practice herself, playing with her own nicknames as a form of subversive expression. In her memoir, she describes how this practice is repeated across generations, starting with her mother, who chooses to go by "Candy" instead of "Lala," the name affectionately used by her relatives (Bag, *Violence* 10). Whereas some nicknames, such as "Fatso," are used against Alice as cruel insults, she also learns of their potential for empowerment. In junior high school, Alice is nicknamed "Jukebox" for humming and singing while she works. Although at first she is embarrassed, her classmates start to play along, encouraging her to "Turn up the jukebox" or "Change the record" in class. Alice writes, "Diane had singlehandedly saved me by giving me a new nickname and validating my singing. Jukebox quickly replaced the calls of Hunch Butt that I'd had to endure in seventh grade" (76). It is then that she starts to use nicknames to construct a new version of self.

In high school, Alice seeks to define and redefine herself through self-fashioning and her growing interest in subculture. She finds glitter-rock, feeling connected with the androgyny and theatricality of artists such as Elton John, Freddie Mercury, and David

Bowie. She engages in fantasy love affairs with these glam rock stars and begins to explore her own bisexuality and challenge gender stereotypes. She starts hanging out in Hollywood, and inspired by the New York Dolls and Kiss, starts using clothes and makeup as a method of self-expression and as way to define herself as an outsider. After a stint as a groupie and a “tough girl makeover,” Alice discovers feminism and decides she wants to be the star of her own life. When she transfers to an all-girl Catholic high school, she takes the opportunity to re-brand herself as “Ziggy,” from the David Bowie record, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), marking the beginning of an exploratory phase of her new-found bisexuality and challenging gender stereotypes in an act of linguistic drag (Bag, *Violence* 108).

During this period of personal exploration, Alice Bag experiments with different subjectivities, performing symbolic and literal cross-dressing. In her “pre-punk days,” she tries on different nicknames such as Elton Jane and Alice Phallus (with her friends Marlene Mattress and Patricia Delicia). After seeing the (first-ever) performance of legendary punk band The Germs, Alice and her friend Patricia are inspired to form their own band. Patricia comes up with the idea for the band’s gimmick of wearing paper bag masks, and the lineup is decided. Alice is on vocals, Patricia on bass, and a school friend, Janet Koontz, on guitar. Two guys that respond to their ad, Geza X and Joe Nanini, play rhythm guitar and drums, respectively. In true punk fashion, after putting together a few songs and practicing for several weeks, The Bags are ready to perform. They promote the band with a photo session and a bag parade. They personalize their bags, cutting holes out for their eyes and mouths and decorating them with colors and accessories. Geza’s is the most extreme, with one long slit cut out in the middle of the face and bloody tampons

hung from the sides. In the photos that accompany this part of the memoir, Joe Nanini is seen in only bowtie and a jockstrap with a dark-skinned doll sticking out of the top; Geza X has foil covering his legs held together with black tape and a pair of stained briefs; and Alice rocks gloves and a t-shirt with pins and chachkis fastened to it with black underwear. All of them have bags on their heads. She writes in *Violence Girl*, “I didn’t dare want to step out of character once I’d turned into a Bag” (206).

The performative aspect of wearing a bag on her head is freeing and transformative for Alice, but the excitement doesn’t last long. Somehow, the group manages to snag the headlining spot at a show at the Masque. On stage, they prepare for their entrance, hiding their street clothes behind the amps to preserve the integrity of their new identities as Bags. Bag writes, “The members of the Bags are meant to remain anonymous, our identities hidden by our paper-bag masks with the only clues to who we are coming from the decorations on our masks and the clothes we’re wearing” (*Violence* 212). This performed anonymity allows Alice to break free of the confines prescribed and imposed on her by dominant society. She grabs the mic and starts singing, screaming, protected and liberated by the bag. She loses control of her body and can’t think straight, describing the scene as a spiritual experience:

The lyrics to the songs come automatically, which is good because I can’t be expected to focus and concentrate in the middle of this religious experience. The herky-jerky dancing is automatic, too. There is so much electricity coursing through my body that I am truly out of control, but I don’t care. I couldn’t stop myself now if I wanted and the release is like an exorcism — it feels so good.

(212)

Then, friend Bobby Pyn (Darby Crash), at the front of the stage, starts coming towards her in what she initially interprets as an affectionate embrace. But instead, he pulls her off the stage and into the audience and rips her bag off, leaving her on display for all to see. She writes, “I am exposed but not defeated” (213). Although temporary, the bag as a figurative and literal mask serves to empower Alice to allow the performance to fully consume her. While the paper bag disappears that night, the Bag identity sticks.

Do-It-Yourself Ideologies and Practices

Throughout *Violence Girl*, Alice Bag describes the ways that certain alternative practices and ideologies that characterize both Chicana culture and the punk scene contribute to the accessibility of punk and its associated politics to marginalized and disenfranchised groups. She describes how during her childhood, her parents often find themselves strapped for money and resources, hence they turn to alternative practices to supplement their income, such as selling quilts that they make out of cloth collected from dumpsters. Rather than feeling ashamed, Alice fondly recalls identifying her mother as the “original DIY-er” and interprets these desperate and precarious responses to scarcity as innovative business efforts in the resistant spirit of the Nahuatl/Chicana sensibility and attitude known as *rasquache*, a word and ideology appropriated from Nahuatl by Chicana artists in the 1970s (10). Tomás Ybarra-Frausto explains *rasquachismo*, rooted in the Chicano movement, to be “neither an idea nor a style, but more of a pervasive attitude or taste. Very generally, *rasquachismo* is an underdog perspective—a view from *los de abajo*. It is a stance rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability, yet ever mindful of aesthetics” (133). The *rasquache* ethics of the Chicano Movement that directly relate to

DIY practices entail getting by with what one has, inventing new uses for conventional objects, and giving new functions to objects traditionally considered broken, evoking the spirit of creating one's own space instead of conforming with what already exists (Doss 156).

Although negatively connotated in Mexico as a lower-class or impoverished attitude turned Chicano sensibility, Amalia Mesa-Bains intervenes in the Movement's masculinist discourses by reinterpreting *rasquachismo* from a Chicana feminist standpoint. Mesa-Bains speaks to the ways in which traditionally feminized spaces and labor can also be reworked as an important survival strategy and resistant ideology. She identifies a feminist interpretation of *rasquachismo* which she calls *domesticana* and explains:

In rasquachismo, the irreverent and spontaneous are employed to make the most from the least. In rasquachismo, one has a stance that is both defiant and inventive. Aesthetic expression comes from discards, fragments, even recycled everyday materials such as tires, broken plates, plastic containers, which are recombined with elaborate and bold display in yard shrines (*capillas*), domestic decor (*altares*), and even embellishment of the car. In its broadest sense, it is a combination of resistant and resilient attitudes devised to allow the Chicano to survive and persevere with a sense of dignity. The capacity to hold life together with bits of string, old coffee cans, and broken mirrors in a dazzling gesture of aesthetic bravado is at the heart of rasquachismo. (157)

This feminist interpretation of *rasquachismo* reflects Alice Bag's understanding of her mother's inventiveness and allows her to explore alternative notions of gender and

sexuality in the DIY punk scene which stood in opposition to the masculinist and patriarchal ideals of the Chicano Movement as well as Alice's patriarchal family life in East LA. The burgeoning alternative music scene in Hollywood depicted in the memoir also stands in stark contrast to the mainstream rock scenes of the era. Whereas 1980s glitter rock and glam metal were characterized by decadent style, outrageous celebrity, and excessive guitar riffs, punk musicians preferred more stripped-down instrumentation, often political and anti-establishment lyrics, and embraced a DIY ethic, self-producing and distributing their music through alternative networks. The DIY punk scene became a place where Bag could freely embrace her fluid and evolving gender and sexuality and renegotiate and redefine her relationship with her *Latinidad*.

At a crucial moment in her journey of self-discovery, Alice Bag describes being rejected by the cool clique of Brown Berets at Garfield High and inspired by the raw sexual androgyny that she finds in Patti Smith and Elton John. She starts hanging out with other misfits from all over LA, and despite their inexperience as musicians, Alice, along with friends Marlene and Patricia, decide to start their own band. As a young, working-class Chicanx, the DIY or do-it-yourself punk ethos made the whole scene accessible. Inspired by the diversity of the nascent punk scene, she writes:

We had been observing the revolution in progress on the East Coast, enjoying the way in which our punk rock founding fathers and mothers challenged the stale old, self-indulgent rock establishment. Now we could see our own roles in that revolution. The night that Mexicans, Weirdos and teenagers with more courage than musical skill could take the stage and bring the house down was the night we all knew without a doubt that the old, tired, long-haired rock 'n' rollers were

about to be ousted, kicked off their gilded thrones; and, incredible as it seemed, it was us — the rabble — who were going to do the kicking. . . .

Suddenly we could see that the rules meant nothing that there were no insurmountable barriers, that everything and anything was possible, that we didn't need managers, and we didn't need to wait to be discovered. All we needed was the guts to try. (*Violence* 183)

By embracing these counter-cultural and alternative approaches of artistic expression and production, Alice Bag develops new strategies of resistance to negotiate her complex subjectivity from the margins and ultimately participate in wider struggles for equality, visibility, and safety.

Countercultural and resistant punk practices and discourse also stimulated in Alice Bag new ideas about challenging wider norms and cultural values, both within Chicanx and mainstream societies. She writes:

What had started as a music scene was turning into a cultural revolution, a revolution that I regarded as deeply personal. Wanting to tear down the music of the bloated past had led us to a point where we had to challenge not only our musical choices but choices about everyday activities, from what we consumed to what we produced, from what we believed to what we found improbable, each reassessment promising to bring with it new insight begging for change...Or maybe I'd just inhaled too much spray-paint making those Weirdos clothes, because, at the time, it felt like punk was the catalyst for something big. (*Violence* 194)

The anti-establishment, anti-authority, and nonconforming attitudes of punk support critical thinking at both the macro and micro levels, and lead punks to question bigger sociocultural and political issues as much as the politics of everyday life. In line with the Chicana feminist tradition of acknowledging the personal as political, Alice Bag challenges everyday values and norms, acknowledging the potential impact that the punk scene and experience represent.

The Seeds of Violence Girl

Violence is a prominent theme in much of Alice Bag's work, including of course the memoir whose title refers to her experiences and her assumed identity. In *Violence Girl*, explicit violence is prevalent in her home life where her father physically abuses her mother; in structural and institutional violence she experiences, especially gender and ethnic and racial violence; and the overall violence and aggression that characterizes the early LA punk scene and increases in the transition to hardcore in the 1980s. In addition, Alice's performances of symbolic violence as the "Violence Girl" speak to her internalization of the explicit violence that characterizes her surroundings. Her relationship with violence is contradictory, ranging from a source of fear to an impressive source of energy, power, and transformation.

For years, Bag describes bearing witness to domestic violence, often being urged to participate by her father and being pressured into taking on the responsibility of stopping it by her mother. When he isn't threatening or physically battering her mother, Alice's father spoils her, instilling in her a confidence that she can be anything she wants to be. The conflicted nature of her father instills in Alice an awareness of the good/evil

duality, one that she connects with pop culture and her conflicting perspectives on the police, but also linked with her growing understanding of violence. At 12 years old, Alice declares that she's not a little girl anymore, and steps in the middle of one of her parents' fights for the first time. As she becomes a teenager, she starts to embrace her aggressive side through self-fashioning, such as in her "tough girl makeover," through nonnormative gender expression and sexuality, and through her general behavior. She embraces promiscuity, which she associates with masculinity, declaring that "I wanted to be able to enjoy sex *a la carte*-just like a male" (Bag, *Violence* 221).

After she moves out of her parents' house into the Canterbury Apartments with her boyfriend and fellow punk rocker, Nickey Beat, a drunken argument between the two ends in a physical altercation that leads her relationship to the violence that marked her childhood with "a sobering slap." When Nickey slaps Alice, she describes falling into a black abyss, "an icy, steely blackness that is clear and strong and leads to a place I never knew existed. I feel powerful and somehow detached from my body. I feel indestructible" (Bag, *Violence* 218). Driving home, she feels transformed, that she has "tapped into something that exists within me but also outside of me. It is a universal dark force or energy" (219). And in this out of body experience, Alice replays the scene, only this time, it is her mother and father. She writes, "I am my father as I launch the blow, I am my mother as I receive it" (219).

Alice's reputation as Violence Girl grows out of her onstage performances as well as her behavior off the stage. Onstage as Alice Bag, she adopts a "sexual outlaw" persona, rather than a more conventionally feminine expression of sexuality (*Violence* 221). Although never condemned for being overly sexual, she was often criticized for her

onstage aggression, labeled as excessively masculine, “too *in your face* for a girl” (220). During their second show at their bag costume debut, Alice describes the intensity of affectual transformation that she experiences on stage. She writes, “[T]here was an intense anger inside of me that turned even the most trite lyrics into a verbal assault. I felt like a woman possessed, and the ritual of being onstage was my exorcism” (215). Alice’s complex relationship with violence also manifests off the stage, where she gets into frequent physical fights. One night in front of the Canterbury Apartments during a deep alcohol-infused discussion, Alice punches Darby Crash of the Germs solidly in the jaw. In describing her experiences with fighting, she writes:

When a bully targeted any of my girlfriends, I stepped in. My protective instincts went into high gear and my fists were swinging before I could think about it. The experience was exhilarating and timeless, not unlike sex or any activity in which you are so immersed that time stands still. I always felt satisfied after a fight, like an ancient thirst had been quenched. Protecting home turf may have been the catalyst for a confrontation, but the thrill of a brawl was intrinsically pleasurable for me, and eventually, I would learn to provide the catalyst if one wasn’t readily available. (234)

Drawing a comparison between the liminality of anger and sex, Alice speaks to an embodied affect that transcends binaries of good and bad states of being. She describes these experiences as transformative, satiating her ancestral desires for vengeance on colonial violence, intergenerational historical trauma, and retribution for all battered women.

For a time, Violence Girl is available to Alice upon summoning like a superhero, the wave of blackness coming over her and her alter ego taking her place. Despite being an imagined source of power, the alter ego gives her courage in potentially dangerous situations, such as when confronted by a man in an alley late one night. But soon the rage starts consuming her. Her performances with The Bags and the audiences begin growing increasingly aggressive, and she starts losing control of her anger. She reflects on this time, “. . . now I can see that I was turning into my father — a monster,” and falls into a depression, turning to self-harm in the form of cutting (Bag, *Violence* 283). The turning point for Alice is not a violent confrontation, however. It is, in fact, an out-of-body experience that comes with no warning or intoxicating substance and which causes her to lose her innermost feelings of self, her sense of right and wrong, of good and evil. This altered state of consciousness, or what Patricia’s boyfriend, Rick, calls “Astral Projection,” shifts Alice’s perspective to a more collective view of the universe (286). She questions her long-held belief in free will, feels lost, looks out the window at a patch of sky, and describes:

In that moment of understanding my miniscule place in the universe, I also felt a part of it. I heard the universe whisper to me. I had to lose what I thought was me, not just all my baggage, but all of *me* — that was my road map. I was more than an individual, and by thinking of myself as an individual I was narrowing the scope of all that I encompassed. It was a brief moment of lucidity that was quickly swallowed up by fear: fear of losing myself, fear of being nothing. (287)

Alice's altered state of consciousness shifts her perspective right then and there, and she decides to move out of the Canterbury and back in with her parents. She is just 20 years old, and her parents welcome her back under the condition that she attend college.

While Alice is looking forward and readjusting her priorities, The Bags continue to play raucous shows, and the violence of the punk scene is growing. The influx of faster hardcore bands makes it impossible to “pogo,”¹⁶ and instead introduces the more aggressive dance style known as “slam-dancing.” The punk scene becomes inundated with widespread drug use. One night, Alice Bag goes to a local Elks Lodge across from MacArthur Park in LA, where X, the Alleycats, the Plugz, the Zeros, and the Go-Go's are supposed to play, when the show gets raided by riot police. Alice spots the police on her way to the bathroom and has a flashback to her experience at the Chicano Moratorium that warned her of how quickly a peaceful event can turn violent. She immediately runs to warn her friends, and they manage to escape the 10 long minutes of police brutally using their batons to beat the hundreds of punks waiting for the show to start. Alice describes her feelings upon seeing the rows of policemen in riot gear:

I'd sensed this danger many times before; I'd grown up with it all my life. It was the plight of the defenseless in the face of unrestrained power and force. It happened in East L.A. when the L.A. County Sheriffs had gunned down Chicano activists, when bullies at Stevenson Junior High would kick some little kid's ass just to show them who was in charge, when my dad's anger with my mom had reached the tipping point. (Bag, *Violence* 304)

¹⁶ Pogo is a dance that was a precursor to modern-day moshing at punk shows. Dancers jump up and down with their torso stiff, their arms rigid, and their legs together.

Seemingly powerless in the face of the excessive force and retaliation that characterizes the LAPD, Alice describes this event as foreshadowing the events surrounding the infamous Rodney King beating of 1991 to connect a history of a ruthless abuse of police power in the city and the repression of any group that may seem to threaten this power, whether it be based on race or punk's outsider status in the 1970s and 1980s.

Despite Alice Bag's spiritual performative experiences, The Bags' reputation had been built on the anger and aggression of their music and live shows. The "American Sabor" Smithsonian website, which chronicles Latinxs in popular music, describes Alice Bag's vocals as defining the aggressive sound of first wave LA punk and even echoing the surrounding tension in the city (*American Sabor*). Alice writes of her perspective on her influence on the violence of the time:

Although I didn't realize it at the time, the Bags had always had a dark, angry core. It's the reason why Brendan Mullen remarked of our first show at the Masque that he'd "never seen a woman so angry," why Craig Lee had written the songs "Babylonian Gorgon" and "Violence Girl" about me, why Bibbe Hansen later described my stage persona as "woman as Avenging Goddess." There was a point in our musical development where our live shows were all energy and chaos, and I felt like I'd inadvertently unleashed the wrath of Kali upon the world of punk. (Bag, *Violence* 308)

Bag's connection between the Black Hindu deity Kali and herself as a punk singer and self-proclaimed Violence Girl links her energy, rage, and empowerment to a transnational mythical historical past that stimulates and feeds her performed symbolic violence. Popular iconography surrounding the depiction of the Hindu goddess Kali has

many similarities to that of the Gorgon that we see in the following section on music, in that she is visibly enraged, fangs protruding from her mouth and a dangling tongue, often accompanied by serpents. In contrast to dominant representations of Gorgons, most legendarily Medusa, which portray her with a pale facial complexion, Kali is marked by her blackness. Known as “The Black One,” the multiple translations of her name from Sanskrit reference her darkness in color. Her blackness speaks to experiences of racial otherness that fuel Alice Bag’s rage. By releasing the wrath of Kali upon the world of punk, Bag challenges the dominant homogenous representations of punk as white, male, and heteronormative, reclaiming the role of QTPOC¹⁷ and other socially marginalized not only as active participants but also central players in the foundation of the punk movement.

By summoning fierce, powerful feminine idols in her performances, Alice Bag taps into her collective ancestral past to uncover resistant practices in true Chicana feminist tradition, but years before many of that tradition’s influential writings. The great Chicana poet, writer, and feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa in her seminal text *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), invokes the figure Coatlicue, the “Serpent Skirt,” and the central spiritual figure that connects Chicanas to their indigenous ancestry as vital to her development of a new *mestiza* consciousness as a strategy of resistance. She describes this deity in *Borderlands*: “Coatlicue depicts the contradictory. In her figure, all the symbols important to the religion and philosophy of the Aztecs are integrated. Like Medusa, the Gorgon, she is a symbol of the fusion of opposites: the eagle and the serpent,

¹⁷ QTPOC refers to queer and trans people of color.

heaven and the underworld, life and death, mobility and immobility, beauty and horror” (69).

Anzaldúa’s evocation of Coatlicue in *Borderlands* serves as a way to demonstrate the history of (symbolic) repression of women in Chicana/Mexican culture. She describes the process through which female deities were historically repressed by the patriarchal Azteca-Mexica culture, then later by Spanish *conquistadores* and the Catholic Church. The Aztecs divided the once complete deity into its separate light and dark, or underworld aspects, and the Spanish and the Church furthered the split by condemning her inherent sexuality, reinforcing the virgin/whore dichotomy, with la Virgen de Guadalupe/Virgen María on the “light” side, and Tlazolteotl/Coatlicue/la Chingada on the “dark” side. Anzaldúa makes a direct connection between the Hindu goddess Kali and the demonization and “darkening” and disempowerment of these symbols.

The destruction of these problematic dualities serves as the basis for *mestiza* consciousness, and Coatlicue holds a vital role in this process. When asked about her relationship to goddesses and deities in an interview, Gloria Anzaldua explains:

. . . I feel close to Kali, Tlazoltéotl, and Coatlicue. Also, most of them have to do with sexuality, witchcraft, and the repressed. All my life I felt those bad parts of myself punished and ostracized that I wanted to bring them to the light. Not only personally, but collectively, like all of women’s religion had been taken and pushed into the underworld. I see a resurgence of all of it. My whole struggle has very much been represented by Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction and death but also of life, the blackness, the negativity, the alien. There she is, so alien, and then there’s Coatlicue with the face of two serpents facing each other. She has

human skulls around her neck; her skirts are serpents, and her hands are eagle claws. She's so animal, so totally other, not human. (*The GA Reader* 93-94)

The overlapping of these powerful female mythological figures in Anzaldúa's "Coatlicue State" and Alice Bag's performances as the "Babylonian Gorgon," described below, and her unleashing the wrath of Kali on the punk world draw interesting comparisons between their strategies of resistance. The Coatlicue State in *Borderlands* is a rupture, a state of reflection, of painful processing, of plunging in and embracing the darkness of the underworld and being devoured by the depths of the serpentine Earth. Anzaldúa describes her ultimate objective in the chapter titled "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness":

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to this problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. 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. (102)

Whereas Anzaldúa must conjure, inhabit, and surrender to the paradoxical deity Coatlicue in order to embrace global sociocultural change, Alice Bag is empowered to fight oppression through this same collective spiritual consciousness, which crosses borders of space and time. By evoking these powerful and ambiguous female mythical figures within a space of punk performance as well as in a memoir that contests the

dominant punk narrative, Alice Bag demonstrates the convergence of her multiple subject positions and how she asserts and inscribes her own indigenous Chicana roots into punk history.

Alice never actually gains control in her memoir over the violence and anger that characterizes so many aspects of her life, however, and in fact, its darkness, that which immobilizes her in the face of good and evil, is evident to many, at least in her onstage performances as Alice Bag. By attributing this unbounded force to the ancient goddess Kali, she makes a cross-generational and cross-cultural connection of violence and historical trauma, an uncontrollable and unpredictable violence that can easily slip between productive manifestations of outrage and dangerous rage. When Kali enters the world of punk, however, her gendered and racial otherness also mimics that of Alice and other people of color, whose experiences starkly contrast with the overwhelming homogeneity of the mostly white, middle-class, male crowd of hardcore newcomers. And once she is released, it's out of Alice's hands.

Alice Bag did not, however, look back on her youth through her memoir with an overly cynical or nostalgic perspective. Her approach applies just as much to her recollections of the early punk scene as to her own relationship to violence. Her confrontations with violence, a complex negotiation of identity, and empowerment through the punk subculture all play a role in the shared and collective experience of many queer punks: one of precarity. Not only was the scene filled with violence, both between different punk groups and mentalities and state-sanctioned in the form of police brutality, but certain practices and discourses also contributed to an environment of unpredictability and insecurity, often characterized by nihilism and drug use. Towards the

end of her memoir, Alice Bag describes the changing landscape of the punk scene in the spring and summer of 1979, as the popularity of punk increased and the birth of hardcore started to bring to the scene a more mainstream, homogenized group, stifling the diversity, nonconformity, and creativity that had drawn her to punk in the first place.

Responding to the crowd's lack of energy and engagement, she writes:

Rock music has never been an intellectual exercise for me, which explains why I always listen for melody and emotion first, lyrics second. I had always said that I wanted to erase the line between performer and audience, to do away with the barrier of the stage, but now it became apparent to me that hardcore audiences weren't so much there for a live performance as they were looking for a live soundtrack to work out their frustrations. Punk rock had entered a new stage in its evolution, as had I. (*Violence* 309)

Due to the increasing violence and unpredictability of the scene up and down the West Coast, promoters and venues start banning punk shows. The Bags' live performances are disintegrating, the tension and discomfort of touring damaging their relationships.

Surrounded by the harsh reality of many of her friends becoming junkies, Alice stops having fun on stage. Feeling unable to change and reinvent herself, Alice began to feel stuck in her role as Alice Bag, and the band breaks up.

While her tenure in The Bags might have ended almost four decades ago, punk has forever left a mark on Alice Bag. The next section will present an analysis of several recent Alice Bag songs in order to trace her engagement in resistant and activist practices through the punk subculture over time and space.

Music

Don't need no false reasons for why I'm out of place
I don't goose step for the master race
I don't scream and twist just for the fun of it
I poison blood when I'm pissed!

Here I go Babylonian Gorgon
I'm gonna babble babble on
So when you're near me, don't be fake
It's gonna be your last mistake

Don't want your private lives
Don't want your industrial lies
Your politician dreams
Your psychodrama schemes
One false move, you're gonna die!

Don't want! Don't need!
The seed that you sow
Get out of my way, I'm ready to go
Tear down, rip up your idol's photograph
Did it all just for a laugh

"Babylonian Gorgon" by The Bags (Survive 7", 1978)

Raw, provocative words roll off her tongue, cutting through and tearing down years, decades, even centuries of imposed expectations and rigid belief systems across geographical and temporal borders. Defiant and bold, Alice Bag reclaims the validity and power that comes from being an outsider and rejecting the constraints and oppressions of dominant structures and ideologies: "Don't need no false reasons why I'm out of place." She denounces the systematic authority of corporatism, capitalism, and xenophobia, and declares, "I don't goose step for the master race."¹⁸ She continues:

¹⁸ This song is found on The Bags' *Survive 7"* (1978), the only record released by the band. The album is currently out of print, and the lyrics to this song are not readily available. The line "I don't goose step for the master race," is widely debated, and is also interpreted by some as "I don't goose step for the masquerade," which could be a reference to the Masque, an LA venue made famous by The Bags and other bands of the era.

I don't scream and twist just for the fun of it

I poison blood when I'm pissed!

Here I go Babylonian Gorgon

I'm gonna babble babble on

So when you're near me, don't be fake

It's gonna be your last mistake (The Bags)

Through the invocation of the symbolic figure of the Babylonian Gorgon amidst the dissonant sounds of a riotous punk anthem, she finally declares herself liberated from these systematic forms of discipline and control. Shouting, "Get out of my way, I'm ready to go / Tear down, rip up your idol's photograph," Alice Bag asserts her own agency and empowerment, calling for the annihilation of such widely accepted and internalized structures and norms by constructing and personifying an ambivalent yet strong female icon that seemingly transcends space and time (The Bags).

Alice Bag constructs and embodies the ambiguous figure of a punk Babylonian Gorgon, an image that taps into complex histories of resistance. Historical and mythological Babylonia is a force of both religious, cultural, and linguistic unity and of oppression, the Whore of Babylon an ambiguous feminine figure. The second symbol of the title refers to the grotesque sister figures of Greek mythological origins known for their venomous snakes for hair, sharp fangs, protruding tongues, and the power to turn those who betray them to stone, the most famous of whom is Medusa. Through the Babylonian Gorgon, Alice Bag embodies conflicting discourses of gender, sexuality, religion, history, and tradition. The Babylonian Gorgon exemplifies the punk performance of Alice Bag in its range of overlapping and intersecting meanings, a

powerful figure on the verge of total rebellion. Just as in the Judeo-Christian origin myth of the Tower of Babel, Alice Bag “babbles on,” speaking a mutually unintelligible language; she is a misunderstood outsider ready and willing to use her venom against any unwelcome onlookers who try to impose their hateful ideologies, regulatory discourses, and oppressive identitarian categories. Alice Bag’s personification and embodiment of the figure of the Babylonian Gorgon in this song aptly inspires my discussion of the politics of resistance in her music, a discussion that characterizes her chaotic on-stage punk performance and historical-mythological serpentine weapons as crucial elements of her resistant practices and consciousness. Whereas in her memoirs Alice Bag explores her own subjectivity and consciousness-building, her music often offers poignant sociopolitical and cultural critique from the first-person perspective through lyrics, sound, and intermediality. This section will explore Alice Bag’s solo music, including her 2016 self-titled debut album and her 2018 release, *Blueprint*, in order to demonstrate how she uses music as an intervention into normative temporal frameworks, dominant narratives of police and violence, and mainstream representations of pop culture icons to bring her utopian visions to our ears.

Alice Bag in the 21st Century

Despite decades of making music, Alice Bag never officially released any albums in a band. The most accessible platform for accessing The Bag’s music is online through sites such as YouTube. This is typical of the trajectory that the evidence of the early punk scene has traveled over the past few decades. For many years, much of the evidence of the early punk scene—as seen in limited runs of records, out-of-print films, piecemeal

materials and recordings, and ephemeral performances—was fragmented and scattered across diverse collections. With the popularity of the internet, however, and particularly YouTube, many of these materials have become openly accessible to the public. Music videos, popularized on MTV in the 1980s as marketing devices for artists and the music industry, are now primarily watched on YouTube.

Since the release of her first self-titled solo album in June of 2016, Alice Bag has embraced the medium of the music video to explore cinematically many of the lyrical themes of her solo albums. Some of her music videos fall into the category of short films more than promotional tools, a tradition that can be traced back to Michael Jackson's groundbreaking video for his 1983 hit "Thriller." Off her first album, Alice Bag released music videos on YouTube for "He's So Sorry," "Modern Day Virgin Sacrifice," "Weigh About You," and "Programmed." In the interim between her first and second albums, in January 2017 she released a video for "Reign of Fear," performed by Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears in response to the presidential election of Donald Trump. From her most recent album, *Blueprint*, (2018), she released videos for "77", "Se Cree Joven," "Invisible," "White Justice," and "Turn It Up."

The genre of the music video expands the potential of Alice Bag's musical messages of dissent through visual and cinematic means. These videos offer queer spaces in which she can explore ambiguity and possibility. Many of her songs speak to an invisible "you" in the second person to criticize oppressive discourses, attitudes, and practices embedded in American culture such as conformity within the educational system, unachievable beauty ideals, age-based discrimination, the gender pay gap, domestic violence, and police brutality, as well as to promote agency and empowerment

in marginalized and subjugated groups. Alice Bag is found in the background of many of these videos, often surrounded by groups of badass and nonconformist friends and other artists, singing and screaming her anthemic critiques with brightly dyed hair and fierce facial expressions.

“Se Cree Joven” and Queer Notions of Time

“Se Cree Joven,” the only song entirely in Spanish on *Blueprint*, exemplifies a spirit of nonconformity and agency in its lyrical themes and its complementary visual elements in the music video. The video was co-written by Alice Bag and filmmaker Marisé Samitier and directed by the latter. The video begins with a traveling close-up shot of Alice Bag from behind, her violet blunt-cut bob and pink leopard dress complementing the kitschy aesthetic of a discount store. With a confident strut, she browses the merchandise while two women peak at her from behind displays, whispering and judging her physical appearance as inappropriate for her age. She sings, “En voz bajita oigo decir,” and as she walks out of the store their disparaging words, together with her dissenting response, become the chorus:

Se cree joven, se cree joven

¿Cómo puede ser?

Se cree joven, se cree joven

Esa mujer

Esa mujer soy yo

Y de quince o de cien

Yo voy a ser quien soy

Porque así me siento bien! (Bag, *Blueprint*)

The song includes backup vocals from Teri Gender Bender of Le Butcherettes and Chilean artist Francisca Valenzuela. We see a long shot of Alice to display her complete look when she greets and embraces a friend on the street. Her friend struts her eccentric aesthetic, with brightly colored, flowing clothes draped over her heavyset body, a bold tattoo covering her exposed chest, bright red lipstick, and pinup-style hair. The two enter a vintage store, and the camera follows them from behind clothing displays as the judgmental women did in the other store. This time, however, the onlookers give them thumbs up in approval while they try on funky sunglasses. As Alice once again declares, “Esa mujer soy yo,” the camera cuts to the dressing room with a long shot to accommodate the five closed doors. The doors swing open, and five unconventionally attired people, including Alice, and diverse in their age, gender expression, race, body type, and physical ability/able-bodiedness dance boldly in the doorways as Alice repeats “Así, así, así me siento bien.” During the interlude, long individual shots of each member of the group turn into medium shots, then close-ups, as they showcase their unique styles, from the androgynous cowboy look of Phranc, former member of punk band Castration Squad alongside Alice Bag as well as of Nervous Gender and Catholic Discipline, to a bleach blond elderly woman in cut off short-shorts dancing with a walker. The camera cuts to the group, dancing playfully around the vintage store while “Se cree joven” repeats. Then the camera scans to the right for individual close ups as each takes off their sunglasses to reveal expressions of defiance (Bag, “Se Cree Joven”).

“Se Cree Joven” celebrates a rejection of normative notions of time that dictate and limit ways to exist in the world. At 59 years old, Alice Bag is actively making punk

music and touring in dingy venues across the country, embracing DIY practices to put out records and promote collectivity, and playfully self-fashioning to embrace nonnormative style and aesthetics. Elizabeth Freeman challenges traditional approaches to history and focuses on bodily pleasure in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), emphasizing “queer asynchronies” that expose ruptures and detours to complicate the relationship between the past and the present. Rather than thinking queerness in relation to a “homogenous empty time,” dictated by discursive regimens of “Western modernity” and capitalist organization like “history ‘proper’ . . . , coming out, consummation, development, domesticity, family, foreplay, genealogy, identity, liberation, modernity, the progress of movements,” all of which are based on a sequential and progressive idea of time, Freeman argues that queer temporalities are visible in moments that produce ruptures in such a notion of time, as “asynchrony, anachronism, anastrophe, belatedness, compression, delay, ellipsis, flashback, hysteron-proteron, pause, prolepsis, repetition, reversal, surprise . . .” (xxii). Thus, such queer temporalities “are points of resistance to this temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future other: that is, of living historically” (xxii).

Lauren Berlant also rethinks the present and dominant neoliberal narratives in relation to queer time in *Cruel Optimism* (2011), but with a focus on negative affect. Berlant refers to the collective social traumas resulting from a mass fading of the conventional notions of a “good” or stable life as “crisis ordinariness.” She argues that this crisis of the “conventional good-life fantasies—say, of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work,” is transforming the collective sensorial organization as decades of class divisions and mobility and

environmental, social, and political precarity of neoliberalism and capitalism have amplified since the Reagan era. Once these fantasies start to fray, including “. . . upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy,” and “. . . when the ordinary becomes a landfill for overwhelming and impending crises of life-building and expectation whose sheer volume so threatens what it means to ‘have a life’ that adjustment seems like an accomplishment,” theories on trauma are no longer useful and a precarious public sphere emerges (3). Freeman and Berlant’s theories on queer temporalities help to reframe “Se Cree Joven” outside of conventional capitalist notions of time and progress in questioning dominant narratives surrounding youthfulness through the surprise elements of joy in the video as nonnormative figures defiantly dance and celebrate their existence in the face of ageist and ableist criticisms.

Alice Bag’s video for “Se Cree Joven” presents a group of nonnormative persons celebrating their rejection of normativity, and thus presenting alternative forms of world-making and demonstrating a queer notion of time that embraces utopian possibilities for minoritarian subjects as seen in Alice Bag and her fellow *jóvenes*. While new aesthetic forms certainly offer a critique of “normative good life fantasies,” we also see how affect plays into the queer time depicted in the video. Facial expressions and bodily gestures in the video for “Se Cree Joven” exhibit a rejection of the collective sensorial and affective experiences of the normative present as well as an emotive vocal emphasis on “bien.” Alice Bag and her posse’s smiles and their sensual and upbeat dancing show joy in subverting affective organization in dominant society and conformity to the status quo as they revel in their queer utopian present in which age does not dictate behavior, aesthetics, or ideologies. Repeating the line, “Así, así, así me siento bien,” Alice holds

onto her vocalization of the “e” for affective emphasis. The group takes their dance party to the streets of LA, cruising down the sidewalk past colorful murals. She holds onto the final “bien” a little bit longer as the song comes to a close, and we hear the voices of the disapproving women say in the background, “Ay no, pero no, ¿por qué se siente bien?” indicating the lack of mainstream acceptance and understanding of her pleasure and reinforcing the nonnormativity of her vision.

“White Justice” and Rewriting History

Alice Bag’s song “White Justice,” off of *Blueprint*, features Martín Sorrondeguy of Los Crudos and Limp Wrist and describes in the first person the experience of being at a Brown Beret march in 1970, presumably the aforementioned Chicano Moratorium organized by the Brown Berets, in which an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 mostly Chicano and Mexican American demonstrators marched down Whittier Boulevard in LA in protest of the disproportionate number of Mexican American soldiers who were drafted and sent to die in the Vietnam War. The peaceful protest quickly turned unruly when the LA riot squad arrived, attacking participants with tear gas. About 150 people were arrested, many were injured, and four were killed, including award-winning journalist Rubén Salazar, who was known for promoting civil rights and exposing police brutality. The media portrayed the march as a riot, blaming the protesters for the violence. However, many participants implicate the police in instigating them. Alice Bag attended the march with her father and sister, as she narrates in *Violence Girl*, describing the event as a critical moment in understanding her status as an ethnic minority. In her memoir, 12-

year-old Alice stands in awe of the Brown Berets, inspired by the female members' militant and rebellious style and attitude.

The music video released in the spring of 2018 for "White Justice" features original footage from the Chicano Moratorium, captured on August 29, 1970 by then film student Tom Myrdahl, and later released as a short documentary, in 2010.¹⁹ The video starts giving credit to Myrdahl's documentary and opens with an aerial shot to present a panoramic view of East LA in sepia tones accompanied by a sentimental piano melody. The images of the march begin with a protest sign declaring, "Be Brown & Be Proud," and we see closeups of the passionate facial expressions, men's and women's boots marching, and fisted hands of men, women, and children marching in the parade and filling the streets. A group of musicians plays acoustic guitars and sings on a stage, and barefoot women dance in traditional Mexican *china poblana* dresses as Alice's lyrics describe the scene on that fated day as calm and celebratory:

Blue skies, Brown Berets

This march feels like a parade

My neighbor and her children came

No one could stay away.

Rest on a green lawn

Agua fresca, yellow corn (Bag, *Blueprint*)

¹⁹ This film and invaluable historical documents titled "Chicano Moratorium" is available on YouTube at youtube.com/watch?v=famNeiosTVk?.

The images have reddish-brown sepia hues, but the repetition of red, green, and white, solid red and Mexican flags, clothing, and background images highlights the nationalism of the Chicano Movement.

As we hear, “Oh no, stormtroopers in uniforms / Are swinging their batons,” the camera becomes shaky and cuts to a long shot of a chaotic mass of people running with dust filling the air, turning the dulled nationalist color scheme to a brownish gray (Bag, “White Justice”). We see police beating protesters with batons, and masses of people in civilian clothes running for their lives. Alice sings:

Black clubs, blue collars

Blood red, silver dollars

You say justice is colorblind

I know you’re lying

I know you’re lying. (*Blueprint*)

In the music video, police cars arrive at the Silver Dollar, the name of the bar where Rubén Salazar was gunned down by police (Bag, “White Justice”). At the 1970 Moratorium, The LAPD fired a projectile tear gas cannister at the crowd and straight into the bar, killing Salazar instantly. Despite the fact that the coroner ruled his death a homicide, no one was ever prosecuted, and many suspected a premeditated assassination of a prominent member of the Chicano Movement. Alice Bag sings the chorus of “White Justice”:

White justice doesn’t work for me

White justice is a travesty

White justice, just isn’t

Just isn't just. (Bag, *Blueprint*)

The "White Justice" that Bag opposes makes reference to the site of the killing of Salazar in her mention of "silver dollars," and it critiques the dominant narrative propagated by the media as being "white justice," only serving to reproduce neo-colonial patterns of violence against people of color by a white majority.

The next verse in the song and the next sequence in the video connect the history of police violence against communities of color throughout the US to the present-day.

Alice Bag sings:

Gray smoke in '70

I still choke when I stop to think

Our struggle then was here at home

And it's still going on. (Bag *Blueprint*)

While the Chicano Moratorium was an anti-war protest, the march as well as the Movement as a whole were formed to fight for civil rights. Both experienced police repression and brutality, as did other minority movements of the time, such as the Black Power Movement. During this verse, the video shows scenes of destruction after the uprising in 1970, and then cuts to a long shot of the LA City Hall building, shifting from antiquated sepia tones to a realistic contemporary look, signaling the shift from the past to the present. Material from Myrdahl's documentary is spliced with news footage from other more recent examples of police brutality. First, we see, on ABC News, the MacArthur Park rallies in LA in 2007, which demanded rights for undocumented immigrants and ended in violence as police officers drove motorcycles through the crowd and attacked protesters with batons and rubber bullets while participants ran for their

lives. Another video from ABC News, of the 2014 police killing in NYC of Eric Garner by chokehold for suspicion of selling single cigarettes with subtitles of his infamous last words, “I can’t breathe,” is followed by a short clip of the moments right before a police officer shot Philando Castile in Minnesota in 2016. The use of the first-person plural “our” in “White Justice” in connecting the repression experienced by Chicanxs during the Moratorium that Alice Bag witnessed as a child with the recent media attention on police killings of mostly unarmed African American men demonstrates a solidarity between the shared experiences of violence among people of color in the US. Whether protesting their own civil rights and unfair treatment based on race, class, or citizenship, or just existing or surviving, this video highlights not only the unequal power relations between the state apparatus and minority communities, but also the growing inequality and structural racism under neoliberal capitalism (Bag, “White Justice”).

As Alice Bag repeats the chorus, the music video features jump cuts between scenes of protest from different times and places, from the Chicano Moratorium to the present. We see the iconic 2016 Black Lives Matter protest photo of an unarmed African American woman in a flowing dress calmly standing in front of police in riot gear, an image of the 2017 International Women’s Day March in LA, and a group of young African Americans with their hands up in the “Hands up, don’t shoot” slogan adopted after the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown as a symbol of outrage over violence committed against unarmed black men by police, among other images of protest and police violence throughout the years. Then the camera cuts to a closeup of Alice Bag singing “White Justice” at a Women’s March, passionately screaming the chorus with short pink hair (Bag, “White Justice”). The connections Alice Bag makes between the

struggles of Chicanxs and Mexican Americans, African Americans, and women throughout this video under the song title of “White Justice” seeks to create an intersectional dialogue among race, citizenship status, and gender to problematize racial binaries by exposing how white justice affects many different groups. Her reflections on the past and present struggles of minority groups in the US also complicate a linear notion of time that offers important perspectives on dominant narratives of progress within neoliberal capitalist society.

In her study *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), Svetlana Boym explores the “historical emotion” of nostalgia as a response to and a rebellion against the modern idea of time as conceived in the teleological and linear narratives of history and progress, directing the gaze not only backwards but sideways (xvi). She traces nostalgia’s origins in Europe to the 17th century, when it was conceived as an individual emotion of sick soldiers. In the 19th century, nostalgia’s relevance shifted to poetry and philosophy, where it evoked a new sense of collective patriotism and romantic nationalism. Boym describes two tendencies that give shape and meaning to this longing for the past that we know as nostalgia: restorative and reflective nostalgia. With its emphasis on the total recovery of absolute truth and restauration of a static past through national symbols and myths, Boym presents restorative nostalgia as that which describes nationalism, antimodern myth-making, and conspiracy theory. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, highlights flexibility rather than stasis and meditates on history and the passage of time rather than proclaiming absolute truths. Boym writes that, “if restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and

temporalizes space” (49). In reflective nostalgia, longing and critical thinking can coexist “as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection” (50).

The opening scene of the “White Justice” music video could at first glance be read as an example of a restorative nostalgic perspective on the Chicano Movement as a celebration of an idealistic Mexican heritage characterized by traditional music, dances, and clothing, food and drink, and the red, white, and green of the Mexican flag. This static and idyllic representation of the past quickly shifts tones, however, as the police violence of that day is highlighted and connected to the widespread structural racism and oppression against people of color in the present day, emphasized by the visual shift from sepia tones to a more modern and realistic color-scheme. While Alice seems to long for the collectivity and unity that characterizes Myrdahl’s footage of the Brown Berets, she inserts this narrative into a larger story that integrates multiple perspectives on histories of civil rights, protest, and multiple levels of institutional and structural violence in the US. Whereas both nostalgic tendencies proposed by Boym involve social frameworks of memory, they tell different narratives. This video can be read as an example of Boym’s reflective nostalgia since it focuses on, and is an intermediary between, both individual and cultural memory. It emphasizes and cherishes the details and fragments of memory and temporalizes protest space. The homecoming, whether to the idealistic view of the Chicano Movement or further back to “traditional” Mexico from both Alice Bag’s personal experience of attending the Moratorium and other protests or a more collective cultural reminiscence of the history of violence, is eternally deferred, demonstrating Alice Bag’s capacity for simultaneous longing and criticism of the sexism and

homophobia that characterizes such nationalisms. As Boym explains, “A modern nostalgic can be homesick and sick of home, at once” (50). This notion allows for a more nuanced relationship with cultural and ethnic history that retains important cultural ties while also making space for a critical view that reflects feeling “sick of home,” problematizing idealistic nationalisms that reproduce exclusivity and oppression.

By juxtaposing footage of the Chicano Moratorium with more recent protests by intersectional movements such as Black Lives Matter, Alice Bag complicates the relationship between the past and the present. As Boym points out, nostalgia is inherently a yearning for a different time, and it has a utopian dimension. Since conventional confines of time and space repress nostalgia’s capacity for utopianism, however, its gaze is directed sideways, rather than to the past or the future (xiv). She explains later that, “. . . the past opens up a multitude of potentialities, nonteleological possibilities of historical development. We don’t need a computer to get access to the virtualities of our imagination: reflective nostalgia has a capacity to awaken multiple planes of consciousness” (50). The gesture of reflective nostalgia enacted in the “White Justice” video demonstrates the potential for a meditation on the past that can create new connections and help to draw alternative narratives that complicate a linear conception of history. By inserting diverse movements of the present such as Black Lives Matter and feminism into the past narrative of the Chicano Movement under the notion of “White Justice,” Alice Bag intervenes into the past with the present to highlight the growing inequality and oppression under neoliberal capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy and white supremacy that extends to many minority communities. In this way, she promotes intersectional solidarity between the struggles of these diverse groups, promoting the idea

that all oppressions suffered by minoritarian subjects are part of a broader fight for social justice.

In rethinking the past-present relationship, Elizabeth Freeman contests the idea that the political and social struggles that have already been fought and won, or lost, now pertain to the past through an analysis of a diverse archive of queer literary, film, video, and visual artists who emerged in what she calls a “postfeminist,” and “postgay” world marked by commodification and consumerism. She writes, “Pure nostalgia for another revolutionary moment . . . will not do. But nor will its opposite, a purely futural orientation that depends on forgetting the past. Instead, the queerness of these artists consists in mining the present for signs of undetonated energy from past revolutions” (xvi). Due to its nationalism and deeply entrenched machismo, the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s as well as some Black nationalist movements of the era silenced many women and queer people of color. Second-wave (white) feminism also excluded women of color, and it wasn’t until the 1980s that Third World Women of Color feminism demonstrated through anthologies such as *This Bridge Called My Back*, mentioned above, that these subjects brought their intersectional marginalization to the forefront of critical discourse. But Alice Bag does not only make nostalgic connections between movements of the past and the present in “White Justice.” Instead, she also revisits the Chicano Movement with an open, subjective perspective. Alice Bag recreates her experience as a young Mexican American girl at the Chicano Moratorium whose political consciousness was just developing, mesmerized by the militant women of the Brown Berets, inspired to find her own place in the revolution, yet through the lens of the veteran punk she is, searching for the spark that inspired her to continue *la lucha*.

Alice Bag is participating in a well-established Mexican and Chicano tradition of revisiting, revising, and rewriting exclusionist historical narratives. This tradition goes at least as far back as Diego Rivera's mural, *La Historia de México* (1929-1935), which inspired members of the Chicano Movement to fight for civil rights and economic justice. Some of the most famous efforts to use the strategy of decolonizing and challenging dominant historical narratives are "Yo soy Joaquín" (1936), an epic poem by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzáles and *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971) by Tomás Rivera. In the 1980s, Chicana feminist and queer writing surged as a response to the machismo of the Chicano Movement and the silencing of women and queer writers, as well as to women of color's exclusion from second wave feminism. Most famous is Gloria Anzaldúa's previously mentioned work, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, in which she complicates and rewrites the history of the US-Mexico border to insert personal and embodied experiences of women of color and queer Chicanxs into dominant narratives. Anzaldúa's text itself can be read as a disidentification, reworking Vasconcelos's theories of "*la raza cósmica*" and the notion of *mestizaje* in general in her construction of a new *mestiza* consciousness as part of a structural process of change that disidentifies with various levels of Mexican, Chicanx, and indigenous cultures.

In the music video for "White Justice," Alice Bag offers a revisionist account of that fated day on August 29, 1970, thus following in the footsteps of her Chicanx activist forebears. The incorporation of footage from Myrdahl's documentary on the Chicano Moratorium, which shows how the celebratory and nonviolent atmosphere of the day was brutally interrupted by the LAPD riot police, presents a counternarrative to the official police and media reports that blame the participants for the violent police intervention,

labeling an otherwise positive event a riot, with all of that term's racialized implications. Anzaldúa's formulation of a new *mestiza* consciousness in *Borderlands* as an ambiguous, inclusive, pluralistic, and collective strategy of resistance promotes action over reaction in the face of violent cultural domination. In Chapter 7, which describes this consciousness, Anzaldúa argues that ignorance on the part of the dominant white culture distorts history and divides people. As a prerequisite of solidarity, she calls for people of color to learn their own histories of resistance. She writes:

Before the Chicano and the undocumented worker and the Mexican from the other side can come together, before the Chicano can have unity with Native Americans and other groups, we need to know the history of their struggle and they need to know ours. Our mothers, our sisters and brothers, the guys who hang out on street corners, the children in the playgrounds, each of us must know our Indian lineage, our *afro-mestizaje*, our history of resistance. (108)

"White Justice" puts into dialogue the historical struggles of Mexican Americans with those of African Americans and women. By emphasizing Mexican and Central American *aguas frescas*, yellow corn with its indigenous ancestors, and blue collars representing the working class, Alice Bag pulls from her personal experience, or theory in the flesh, of being at the Chicano Moratorium that day and incorporating footage that represents a counternarrative to the day's events and tying these struggles to wider issues of race, class, and gender, of police brutality among communities of color and women's issues over the last five decades.

Queer Utopias and Violence

Many other recent Alice Bag songs and music videos are protest songs, but “Reign of Fear” released in January 2017 by Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears is especially explicit in its political critiques of the current US presidency and its promotion of Alice’s view of a queer utopian future. The music video starts by combining the sound of a high-pitched electric guitar riff with a quote from *War Talk* (2003), a book by Indian writer and political activist Arundhati Roy: “Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it” (142). The first image of the video is a close up of Donald Trump with a very angry expression as Alice sings, “This is not normal / Let’s not pretend.” An array of images characterizing the Trump campaign and presidency flashes on the screen, including a group of Trump supporters with Confederate and Nazi flags performing Nazi gestures and images alluding to Trump’s sexual harassment allegations (Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears). Alice declares:

It’s beyond politics

It’s about hate

You’re looking for a scapegoat

To make you feel great. (Bag, *Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears*)

As an electric guitar riff prepares for the chorus, there is a slow-motion video of a street demonstration with people of diverse ages, races, and genders, all collectively protesting Trump, and Alice sings with an attitude, “We reject your / Reign of fear” (Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears).

A striking image of Trump appears on the screen in a throne draped with an American flag, a crown on his head and the dress of an emperor with two armed guards to either side. The camera zooms out from his face several times. His bleached hair reflects the gold in the oversized collar of his robe and his crown, and with his head tilted down, he squints just slightly, his eyes dark and piercing against the light bouncing off his under-eye bags. The lyrics to the chorus appear over his face in a cut-and-paste style, reminiscent of DIY zine aesthetics. As the chorus repeats, homemade videos of fans and friends of Alice appear, singing along and rocking out to the music. Michelle Cruz Gonzáles of Spitboy and Vaginal Davis, along with many others, appear in the video (Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears). The last verse sounds:

The future is female

The future is queer

Look out man cuz

The future is here

The future adapts to

Meet our needs

The future comes in

All colors and creeds. (Bag, *Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears*)

We see images of a witch, trans solidarity, a painting of the 2017 National Women's March in DC with a woman in her pussy hat holding a "WARNING THIS PUSSY GRABS BACK" sign, Stephen Hawking, a queering of a gendered bathroom logo, and a symbolic embrace of religious diversity (Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears). The home videos

start featuring angrier closeups with offensive gestures and signs that emphasize the lyrics:

We'll resist you

We'll stand in your way

We'll take you down cuz

You're fuckin' insane

You're going down

You're going down. (Bag, *Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears*)

Alice Bag's powerful deep voice turns into a piercing scream as she accuses Trump of being insane, and the infamous video of him mocking New York Times journalist Serge Kovalski for having a disability that affects his movement appears on the screen.²⁰ Her screams intensify until the last clip in the video appears: Alice kicking a piñata in the form of Trump. The video ends by zooming in on an image of a protest sign that states "HATRED'S GREATEST WEAPON IS COMPLACENCY" (Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears). The last guitar chord is released, as if expressing catharsis as a result of the symbolic violence built up in the song and video. Through collective anger and protest expressed by the multitude of voices represented who share in Alice's critique of the violent rhetoric and its real consequences propagated by the Trump administration, "Reign of Fear" promotes a queer utopic outlook in an otherwise precarious and terrifying political situation for many marginalized groups.

²⁰ This video can be found at youtube.com/watch?v=PX9reO3QnUA.

Domestic Violence and Intermediality in “He’s So Sorry”

Alice Bag’s recent solo albums contain many songs that deal with different forms of violence. “Inesperado adios” describes in Spanish how the impact of immigrant deportation affects whole networks of people. “No Means No” criticizes sexual assault and victim blaming. “77” expresses outrage over the structural inequalities that produce the gender pay gap. And “White Justice” reflects on the institutional racism and violence against brown and black bodies from the Chicano Moratorium to the present. Two songs in particular, “Suburban Home” and “He’s So Sorry,” deal with violence against women.

Alice Bag released a video for the latter, off her 2016 self-titled album, which she co-wrote and co-directed with Marisé Samitier, who also worked with Alice on the video for “Se Cree Joven.” The song starts with the legendary bum-ba-bum-BOOM drum intro, made famous by The Ronettes in their 1963 hit “Be My Baby.” The spoken word intro, reminiscent of The Shangri-Las 1964 teenage tragedy hit “Leader of the Pack,” begins with a dialogue between Alice Bag and the battered woman protagonist of the video, actress Christine Uhebe, who is applying makeup to Alice as they say:

ALICE. Are you really going back to him?

PROTAGONIST. He said he was sorry.

ALICE. He always says that!

PROTAGONIST. I really believe him this time (Bag, “He’s So Sorry”)

The two women turn to face the camera, Uhebe’s character with a black eye. Alice Bag is dressed in 1960s garb, with her hair in a half bouffant and dark eye makeup, the signature style of the 1960s band The Ronettes, and peter pan collar mod style dress. The video turns to black and white as the women part ways, and the camera pulls away to reveal

that the framing of the shot is actually on the television set of the home of a dysfunctional couple, played by actress Christine Uebe and actor Johnny Avila.

The melodramatic ballad is accompanied by the clips in full color of interactions between the couple featuring graphic depictions of violence interspersed with short, seemingly vintage black and white shots of Alice Bag and two other women dressed as a 1960s girl band. We see a distressed man on a couch, and his partner approaches to comfort him as Alice Bag sings, “Boo hoo, he started to cry,” followed by, “Bam, came the punch to the eye. / You provoke him he says / Don’t you know how he gets? (*Alice Bag*)” The actors depict emotions and affect without dialogue, the lyrics to the song narrating the storyline. Seemingly angry at her for witnessing his vulnerability, the man takes his anger out on her physically. He first shoves her into a wall and then out the door, but when he expresses regret, she hesitantly shows understanding. However, upon opening the door, he starts where he left off and starts aggressively swinging at her (Bag, “He’s So Sorry”).

The lyrics are directed at the second person, “you,” to address the victim and reflect the ambivalent feelings experienced in manipulative and abusive relationships such as the one depicted, emphasizing the contrast between the physical violence inflicted and the lines a victim of domestic abuse often tells herself. Light, seemingly romantic moments between the couple in the video such as the man coming up behind her to hug her in the kitchen, giving her a rose, spooning on the couch, and being playful and teasing her with a pencil she drops are interrupted as Alice sharply sings:

Crack, boots and your ribs collide

Quietly bleeding inside

And as you fade from the scene

You can hear the sirens scream

But you love him and he's sorry (he's so sorry)

He won't do it no more

You really want to believe him cause he's sorry (he's so sorry)

Much more than before (Bag, *Alice Bag*)

The harmonious scenes give way to violence, and the two struggle as he forcefully pushes her down the stairs. From the floor, she grabs for him, hoping that his other personality comes through and helps her, but he stomps her already limp body with his boot over and over as the sharpness of the shot fades away reflecting her fate. Now the formerly tender moments are revealed to be the moments before violent backlashes, as he pushes her in the kitchen, gets angry at her for dropping the pencil or pricking her finger on the rose thorns and shoves her, and caresses her bruised neck on the couch before he forcefully grabs her hair (Bag, "He's So Sorry").

The backup vocals singing "(he's so sorry)" echo the chorus and underscore the influence of the 1960s girl group style and Phil Spector's famous Wall of Sound that amplified the girl group sound that Alice invokes in this song. As the woman returns home from the hospital, cutting off her patient wristband to pack a bag and taking some pills, Alice sings, "How many times do you touch a hot stove to see if a flame will burn? / (How many times?) / How many times must he beat you senseless, oh baby when will you learn?" (*Alice Bag*). We see a closeup of her smiling face and hair blowing in the wind as she drives; the sun sets and reflects a golden glow over most of her face. We hear Alice repeatedly warn, "You better get out! (Better get away, better get away!) / Get out

now,” when she wakes up on their bed from her dream of escape to the man standing over her, looking around at the suitcases on the bed at the realization that she plans to leave him. Alice Bag continues to sing her warning, but when he gives her a final shove, she falls and hits the back of her head on a piece of furniture and instantly dies, a puddle of blood seeping from her fatal wound (Bag, “He’s So Sorry”).

The famous “bum-ba-bum-BOOM” drum beat returns, as we see the three girl band members now in color dressed head to toe in black with their heads covered in black lace veils throw soil in what is presumably a coffin one at a time from a low angle shot. The backup singers repeat “He’s so sorry” as they walk solemnly through a cemetery. The funeral cuts back to the black and white shot where the backup singers dance, swaying back and forth in typical 1960s girl group style, still repeating the chorus while Alice somberly sings:

Just because he’s sorry doesn’t mean he’s gonna change
Just because you love him doesn’t mean you’ve gotta stay
Oh you better get out.
Get out, get out. (Bag, *Alice Bag*)

She repeats these last two lines as the shot cuts back to the cemetery and the song fades out (Bag, “He’s So Sorry”).

This song is particularly impactful in its exploration of domestic violence because of its complex layering of intermedial connections through historical musical reference. In Peter Wagner’s book *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, he explores the interplay between texts and images and theories of reading visual representations. In his introduction, Wagner discusses the tendency of Western

culture to attempt to control the power of images or visual representations through ekphrasis, which “translates the pictorial into the readable, thus controlling and encircling it with words” (31). He problematizes the assumptions that differentiate the visual from the verbal, or the visible from the readable, proposing mobile intertextuality in the study of art, explained as a consideration of both the linguistic and pictorial signs, or an intermedial exploration (36). He defines intermediality as “the ‘intertextual’ use of a medium . . . in another medium . . .” (17).²¹

While surely Alice Bag’s personal experience influenced the lyrical content of “He’s So Sorry,” the stylistic decision to pay homage to the Wall of Sound style invented by the notorious producer and songwriter, Phil Spector, plays with these connections in interesting ways. Adopting the signature drum intro of the Wall of Sound and of The Ronettes’ classic hit, “Be My Baby,” references the infamous relationship between Spector and the lead singer, Veronica “Ronnie” Yvette Bennett in its theme of domestic violence. In her memoir, *Be My Baby: How I Survived Mascara, Miniskirts and Madness* (1990), Bennett recounts escaping barefoot from years of being held hostage by her then husband in 1972 with the help of her mother. While many reviews of Alice Bag’s album make reference to the song as an homage to the 1960s girl group aesthetic, and others cite Alice’s statement describing the influence of her childhood on the lyrical content, she is also quoted as explaining her commentary on Spector and his signature sound:

[It’s] kind of like a reply to [him] and the way that he treated women in his life.

It’s like, as someone who grew up listening to that, I’m really deeply influenced

²¹ The term “intertextuality” is attributed to Julia Kristeva in the 1960s. In breaking with conventional notions of influences and textual sources, she proposes that, “[A]ny text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (37).

by it—and then, you know, it’s so hard for me to accept that someone who created such wonderful music was such a dick. So I wanted to respond like, “Look, I can take this music that shaped me and take the beautiful part and reply to someone in an abusive relationship, someone who might have been involved with someone like Spector, by using his own tools.” (qtd. in J. Jackson)

From an intermedial perspective, Alice Bag’s incorporation of the 1960s sound associated with Phil Spector does not simply attest to its influence on “He’s So Sorry,” but instead engages in a complex dialogue with the many contexts that this implies. Not only is she invoking Spector, but also The Ronettes, who contribute to the rich intermedial relationships in the song and video for “He’s So Sorry.” A 2018 NPR article by Hilarie Ashton complicates the narratives surrounding The Ronettes’s influence in rock and roll history based on lyrics and sound, neither of which can be attributed to them. Ashton instead focuses on the way they constructed their sound and look through vocal and visual choices that characterize them more as a proto-rock group that challenged societal expectations on how a “pure” girl group should present themselves in the 1960s. Focusing on their Spanish Harlem accents, pouffed hair, heavy eye makeup, and sex appeal, Ashton reads The Ronettes as a “bad girl” girl group in an attempt to challenge the masculinized Wall of Sound narrative. In addition to challenging this dominant male-centered narrative of music and pop culture history, there are also racialized components, seeing that The Ronettes are women of color, and the impossible-to-separate sexual assault allegations brought against Spector over the years, not to mention his murder conviction. In “He’s So Sorry,” Alice Bag’s use of sound, style, and movement not only condemns sexual violence using Spector’s own tools, but also

contributes to her message of empowering battered women by invoking a quiet rock rebellion, not unlike the one brought about by The Ronettes in their subversive aesthetics. In addition, “He’s So Sorry” also employs the spoken word intro and the sequence of a teenage tragedy song, made famous by The Shangri-Las hit, “Leader of the Pack,” flipping the stereotypical story of lost love to demonstrate the consequences of staying in an abusive relationship. The protagonist in the video wants to forgive her abuser but is unfortunately killed before she can escape his wrath.

An intermedial reading of “He’s So Sorry” can be expanded upon by considering José Muñoz’s framework in *Disidentifications*. He explores disidentification as a method of resistance and a survival strategy employed by minority subjects to negotiate a majoritarian public sphere that condemns nonnormativity. As opposed to identification or assimilation, in which the subject gives in to dominant ideology, or counteridentification, in which the subject seeks a utopian notion of becoming liberated from this dominant ideology, he defines disidentification as:

the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology . . . this “working on and against” is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance. (11-12)

I read “He’s So Sorry,” as a disidentificatory performance that negotiates the dominant masculinized narratives of pop culture that privilege sexual abusers and exempts them from suffering the social consequences of their actions while also suppressing the voices

of women and victims of sexual violence, even more so women of color as seen in The Ronettes or in Alice Bag's family history. The disidentification lies in the fact that Alice Bag neither assimilates to these oppressive systems and narratives nor rejects them, instead reworking the embedded codes to subvert their meanings. "He's So Sorry" demonstrates the resistant potential of Alice Bag's song and of Muñoz's theory, a potential that prioritizes the agency of women of color and seeks to redirect the multiple power relations at play.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have presented a range of Alice Bag's multimedia works, including her memoir *Violence Girl: From East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage* and several songs and their corresponding music videos off of her two most recent albums, *Alice Bag* and *Blueprint*, as well as a song by her side project, Alice Bag & the Sissy Bears. Through close readings and intermedial analysis, I have demonstrated Alice Bag's crucial role in the queer Latinx punk movement as a contributor to alternative epistemologies and genealogies, thereby challenging dominant exclusive narratives of punk such as the "white riot" narrative, and illustrating the potential of punk in the building of collective critical consciousness and the catalyst for social change. Her transgenerational, intersectional, and transnational perspective and multimedia contributions to the subculture are vital in challenging simplistic and exclusive characterizations of punk temporalities and spaces, opening up new routes within the limited punk canon and scenes.

In addition to her narrative and musical work, however, Alice Bag is an active blogger as well as a feminist archivist, constructing an online archive of interviews, old and new, photos, and videos that document the stories of the women who actively participated in the early LA punk scene. She is frequently outspoken about rewriting punk narratives that exclude and erase diversity, using her personal experiences to support her vision of punk. On the social media blog site Tumblr, Alice Bag offers her perspective on the matter:

Punk has been portrayed as music for and by angry white males but in its inception it was a rebellion against all rock clichés. Gender, ethnic, sexual, and class taboos were all challenged by our early punk rock community and that is not a story which is often told. You certainly don't get that picture from many books or documentaries about punk. People of color, queers, and women – all were present from the inception of punk but their stories are seldom told or heard. Punk should be about inclusion. (“July 18, 2015.”)

Alice Bag's decades-long influence on the punk subculture is hardly waning, and some of her most important contributions serve to broaden the visibility of minority voices and experiences in punk music and art scenes through alternative archiving practices. In his pivotal text, *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida explores the fluid relationship between the archive and what it archives. Derrida asserts that “the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (17). Alice Bag has an ongoing collection of interviews on her website titled “Women in L.A. Punk Archives” in which she seeks to represent punk in

innovative ways, broadening the discussion from more traditional contributions, such as musicians and artists like Joanna Spock Dean of the band Backstage Pass and Penelope Houston of The Avengers, to also include other important participants such as Heather Valiant Ferguson, punk hairdresser for many California bands including The Avengers, The Cramps, and The Ramones, and other women who contributed by attending shows, living in punk spaces such as the Canterbury where Alice Bag lived for a short time, and supporting their friends. Through her “Women in L.A. Punk Archives” Alice Bag not only documents and preserves these marginalized experiences, but the innovative structure also serves to produce these experiences, honoring alternative perspectives in the history of punk in a highly accessible way.

Although it’s already been stated, Alice Bag’s importance cannot be underestimated. Not only did she help build the punk subculture in its early days in LA, but her impact on punk sound and her ongoing musical, narrative, and documentary contributions continue to broaden, diversify, innovate, and challenge existing cultural production, discourses, and structures. Reflecting on her alternative, subcultural education towards the end of *Violence Girl*, she writes, “Punk taught me never to be afraid to try something I really wanted, not to let a lack of experience stand in my way” (347). She describes how she later delves into philosophies that embraced marginal perspectives, such as Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which guided her work as a bilingual teacher in Koreatown, where she taught predominantly immigrant children in an area plagued by gang violence. By devoting herself to combating ignorance and illiteracy, she realizes that, “teaching someone to read was itself a revolutionary act” (Bag, *Violence* 372). She continues:

Music always seemed to be there, lighting a path for me, helping me get beyond the limitations of my left-brain thinking. It was a source of power for me and a way to express the ineffable, even before I knew I had anything to say. Like magic and religion, it gave me access to an alternate fountain of information, one which I have continued to drink from over the years. (380)

And she remains the Violence Girl, challenging stereotypes, defying rules, and continuing to pave new ways for queer Latinx punks and other marginalized subjects to negotiate their positions, tap into, and help construct an archive of alternative knowledge. Through her construction of self, engagement with DIY practices, rewriting of dominant historical narratives, establishment of intersectional, transnational, and trans-historical connections with other marginalized experiences and resistant practices, imagining of a queer utopian amidst political turmoil and oppression, critical intermedial dialogues, and alternative archival practices, Alice Bag demonstrates the transformative power and resistant potential of punk as a base for a queer Latinx punk movement.

Chapter II: Martín “Crudo” Sorrondeguy

You say you call yourself a punk?
Bullshit!
You're just a closet fucking Nazi
You are bullshit!
You just don't understand us
Bullshit!
You just fucking fear us
Bullshit!
We're that spic band!
We're that spic band!

“That’s Right Motherfucker, We’re that Spic Band” by Los Crudos

Introduction

Pacing back and forth across a low makeshift stage in a well-lit windowless venue with red walls in his hometown of Pilsen, Chicago, Martín “Crudo” Sorrondeguy stands amidst his bandmates, passionately speaking to a diverse, tightly-packed crowd of young punks. He tells the story behind the lyrics to one of Los Crudos’s most popular songs, “That’s Right Motherfucker, We’re that Spic Band,” based on racist comments made by several members of the hardcore scene who referred to them as a “spic band.” The crowd attentively listens as Martín describes how these scenesters defended their offensive statements by stating, “but Martín’s cool . . . Martín’s a cool guy.” There is sporadic laughter from the crowd. Still pacing, Martín goes on, “No, fuck you. I’m not a cool guy.” The crowd bursts into applause and vivacious cheering. He explains that these oppressive discourses demonstrate the importance of an all-Latinx punk band and why the kids from this primarily lower-class Latinx neighborhood have been loyal to Los Crudos from the beginning. Speaking in a collective “we,” Martín declares the band’s refusal to succumb to disparaging attitudes that perpetuate systematic discrimination,

asserting that, “none of us feel less than anybody else for where we were born, the language we speak, the foods we eat, what we’re about, about our history, about our families, there’s no shame” (Sorrondéguy, *Beyond* 00:21:21-00:22:25). This anecdotal introduction is a performative call to arms, unifying the crowd through dialogic, collective discourse, and it serves as an example of how Latinx punk embodies many of the antiestablishment and nonconformist attitudes, aesthetics, and practices of the mainstream “white riot” punk narrative, while also maintaining enough critical distance to engage the complex politics and histories that characterize punk throughout the Américas.

This live performance by singer and lyricist Martín Sorrondéguy, better known by his punk name Martín Crudo, is found in a videoclip of Los Crudos’s last official performance in a Chicago gallery in 1998, which appears in his documentary *Beyond the Screams/Más Allá de los Gritos: A U.S. Latino Hardcore Punk Documentary* (1998). It is the first and only document that presents the history of the Latinx punk scene in the US from its origins in the “East LA Renaissance” during the 1970s until the end of the 1990s. Martín Crudo, a Uruguayan-American queer punk icon from Pilsen, Chicago, is a prominent figure in the Latinx hardcore punk, straight-edge, and queercore scenes of the 1990s to the present. The vocalist of numerous bands, including Los Crudos and Limp Wrist; owner of the DIY record label Lengua Armada Discos; documentarian; photographer; and graphic artist, Martín has documented queer Latinx punk narratives in the US and beyond, highlighting through diverse media the many struggles with which these groups are confronted. Many of his contributions diversify and challenge existing

narratives and discourses within the punk subculture, especially through creating, performing, and supporting music.

This chapter considers Martín's diverse contributions to the punk subculture, and as such fulfills one of this project's goals in defining punk as a subculture characterized by its multimedia cultural production and aims to advance our understanding of both punk and Latinx cultures. These contributions include: *Beyond the Screams*, his work as the vocalist of hardcore punk bands Los Crudos and Limp Wrist, a selection of his graphic artwork, and several images from two of his photography collections, which shed light on the diversity of underground punk throughout the world and are titled, *Get Shot: A Visual Diary, 1985-2012* (2012) and *En busca de algo más* (2015). The work of Martín Crudo is unique not only in its multimedia engagement with the subculture, but in mapping new routes and spaces that break with the linearity in time and space that characterizes canonical punk texts, which tend to present scenes and movements as historically and geographically isolated. It also offers intersectional and transnational perspectives to diversify and expand upon more simplistic divisions of identity constructs that are seen in many of the existing punk narratives. In the context of queer Latinx punk, my analysis shows how Martín's work places Latin America and Latinx in dialogue, questions homogeneous narratives of punk and hegemonic identity constructions, and creates an awareness of shared oppressions that promotes cross-cultural hemispheric solidarity and critical consciousness. Fundamental in framing this chapter's analysis is José Muñoz's text, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), in which he offers an "approach to hope as a critical methodology [that] can be best described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision" (4). Located in the present but

not actually existing in the present, the queer utopia that Muñoz describes signals a potentiality that offers important insights into the resistant potential of queer Latinx punk. I will demonstrate that Martín's unique combination of language and humor, gender-bending performances, critical readings of Latinx pop icon Selena, and revisionist archival and DIY practices elucidates vital connections among punk, Latinx, and Latin America, connections that help us better understand the complex and often ignored histories and phenomena of punk in the US and throughout the Américas.

Beyond the Screams: Rewriting Punk History

Beyond the Screams presents Latinx participation in hardcore punk from the 1970s to the 1990s as a movement that responded to specific sociocultural and political moments in history throughout the Américas. Produced and directed by Martín Crudo, the film's duration is under 30 minutes. With a Latinx punk soundtrack, it features a collage of interviews, personal narratives, and footage of critical events, such as a live performance of The Bags in the late 1970s originally found in *The Decline of Western Civilization* (1981). The live performance of Los Crudos described above appears in *Beyond the Screams* and exemplifies the ways in which Latinx punk redefines the subculture to speak to marginalized experiences in Latinx America, specifically those that reflect transnationality and the negotiation of multiple subject positions amidst heightened tensions within a neoliberal society. In addition, it exemplifies the transition in cultural discourse surrounding identity politics reflected in the punk scene as well as Martín's influential role in inspiring and empowering Latinx and other marginalized

punks through art, performance, DIY philosophy and practices, and community building from the mid-1990s to the present.

As discussed in the previous chapter on Alice Bag, Latinxs have been actively involved in punk rock since its emergence in the 1970s, however, as noted above, Martín Crudo's *Beyond the Screams* is groundbreaking in being the first and only chronicle of Latinx punk history in the US. Martín powerfully challenges and rewrites dominant historical narratives of US punk rock by reinscribing Latinx participation and contribution into the history of the subculture through film as Alice Bag does through memoir, music, and her archive of women in LA punk. Despite the active participation of Latinx punks in the formation of the early punk scene, they remained virtually invisible until the 1990s when Los Crudos and other Latinx punk bands started a movement. In an interview in the punk zine *Maximum Rocknroll*, Martín explains:

So people never think of things like the first Black Flag singer, that guy Chavo [aka Ron Reyes], who was Puerto Rican. That was never really talked about. Or that Alice Bag from the Bags, she's Chicana. You know you have the Zeros, the Plugz, the Adolescents, the list goes on. Still nobody would talk about that. It was transparent and nobody was talking about that, you know, it was punks being punk. (qtd. in Duncombe and Tremblay: 250)

Even in some of the most celebrated punk bands in history such as Black Flag and The Adolescents, bands that are present in the "white riot" punk narrative, their Latinx members are whitewashed. By disrupting the status quo narrative of punk history, Martín makes visible the fundamental participation of Latinxs in punk rock since its beginnings and counters exclusionist accounts that erase diversity.

Beyond the Screams explores this topic of diversity in the first wave of punk in the late 1970s and features interviews with Alice Bag and Teresa Covarrubias of The Brat who speak of the so-called Latinx cultural revival in the 1970s in LA where open dialogues took place about the struggles and oppressions that the diverse young punks were experiencing. Covarrubias describes the first show at the infamous Club Vex, a venue opened by the members of Latinx punk band Los Illegals, an event that she calls the “foundation of the East LA Renaissance” of the late 1970s (Sorrondéguy, *Beyond* 00:04:29-00:05:00). Chicane and Latinx punks organized the show not only for the bands that played, including The Brat, The Plugz, and Los Illegals, but also to showcase muralism, performance art, and poetry. Alice Bag interestingly describes this early punk scene as a “melting pot” where the outsiders, or those who wanted to distance themselves from the mainstream as much as possible, would go (00:03:28-00:03:59). In employing the “melting pot” analogy, Bag is signaling that cultural identity and difference are erased and replaced by a “punk” identity. To those Chicane and Latinx punks in this era, punk *was* difference.

While both scenes can be contextualized within a unified history of Latinx punk, the way in which identity politics were perceived and negotiated within punk during its emergence in LA in the 1970s and the Latinx and queercore scenes that Martín’s bands were a part of in the 1990s differed in an important way. Due to punk rock’s relationship with politics and resistance, it’s important to situate the various developments in the subculture within their socio-historical contexts. In *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture* (2005), Michelle Habell-Pallán describes the emergence of punk “aesthetics,” “in part, as a response to the crushing privatization of neoliberal

economic policies” that characterized Reagan’s politics in the 1980s, expanded into the 1990s with the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); an aesthetics that continues to this day as “a direct response to the neoconservative queer bashing and anti-immigrant hostility” (2). Avant-Mier in *Rock the Nation* (2010), his study on Latinx rock music, also comments and elaborates on the ways in which this political backdrop of neoliberal economic policies and anti-immigrant laws, such as Proposition 187, NAFTA, and radical movements in Latin America that resulted from NAFTA including events in Chiapas, Mexico, simultaneously spread controversy and fear amidst the dominant Anglo society and a heightened awareness of discrimination and oppression within Latinx communities (161-2). Amidst this political environment, young disenfranchised punks used the subculture as a vehicle to critique the oppressions they experienced in the everyday.

In *Beyond the Screams*, Martín demonstrates how Latinxs in the 1990s used punk rock as a medium of social protest not only to express anger about the oppressions they experienced in the US, but also in regard to violence and injustices in Latin America that forced many of their families to escape to the US. In their book *Latino/a Popular Culture* (2002), Mary Romero and Michelle Habell-Pallán write, “the cultural impacts of NAFTA are furthering a social dynamic strengthening preexisting ties of immigrants from the Americas to the US and Canada, while simultaneously compelling U.S.-based Latinos to imagine and invent new cultural ties to Latin America” (15-16). In his documentary, Martín describes growing up in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, a majority Latinx neighborhood where gangs actively recruited young people. The kids who didn’t want to enter that lifestyle had to find alternative activities. It was during a trip to visit his cousins

in New York when he was in the fifth grade when Martín discovered punk rock through bands such as The Clash, The Ramones, The Runaways, and The Sex Pistols. There was no punk rock in his neighborhood, and the groups in the wider Chicago area sang about politics that did not directly affect him as a young queer Latinx. He instead sought inspiration in Latin American punk bands of the 1980s that sang about and spoke out against oppressive military regimes and poverty, conditions similar to those from in Uruguay, from which he and his family escaped in the 1970s (Sorrondéguy, *Beyond* 00:02:14-00:08:03).

This was the backdrop for the birth of Los Crudos, a climate marked by the xenophobia and fear propagated by the supposed “Brown Invasion.” Patricia Zavella in “Beyond the Screams: Latino Punkeros Contest Nativist Discourses” (2012), describes the impact of a Latinx punk band touring the country in this sociopolitical and cultural climate, voicing its anger in Spanish through music and performance about injustices suffered by Latinxs on both sides of the border (28-38). From the 1990s on, these cultural connections established and strengthened over the border extended to musical influences that have helped to shape the Latinx punk sound and contribute to the creation of transnational connections through the punk subculture.

Entering the 1990s, however, notions of the “melting pot” and “punk as difference” were not enough for those who did not conform to dominant discourses of race, gender, and sexuality, or to the mainstream representation of punk as a reflection of white middle-class heteronormativity. In response to this, Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay write in their book *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (2011), “Punk identity can no longer see itself as totalizing, but it can develop a notion of

itself as partial, maintaining a relationship to its outside, and sustaining difference within and against itself. We're not all 'just punk'; it's never that simple. We all come to punk from different intersections of class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and, of course, race" (17). This understanding of punk evokes the notion that identity and power are relational rather than a fixed discourse, as theorized by Michel Foucault. By erasing diversity within punk, the punk scene is essentially raceless, or whitened, and limited by cisheterosexist notions of gender and sexuality.

Los Crudos was the first band to separate itself clearly from this so-called raceless scene. They went beyond emphasizing difference within punk; they actively worked to bridge their seemingly disparate communities, the Latinx community and the punk scene. They achieved this by addressing specific issues that affected Latinxs in the US in their Spanish lyrics and band merchandise artwork, as well as by approaching punk as a political movement with a DIY infrastructure that engaged in grassroots activism and supported the Latinx community through benefit shows (Palafox 4). Duncombe and Tremblay describe Los Crudos:

As a band that sang almost exclusively in Spanish, and wrote songs about political concerns in their local Chicago Latino community and in Latin America at large, they were never simply a punk band playing for a punk community, but a punk band purposely *of, within, and for* the Latino community. Punk rock wasn't a way to escape the strictures of their ethnicity; instead it was another way to embrace it. Los Crudos saw punk rock as a way to undo the cultural, political, and economic conditioning that had forced them to repudiate their own language and culture, and used punk to reclaim this Latino identity. (sic; 241-2)

Instead of functioning as an alternative to mainstream Anglo, Latinx, or Latin American cultures, Latinx punk served as a vehicle to foster a political consciousness and activism in punk that facilitated a critique of cultural norms both outside and within Latinx and punk communities.

Latinx Punk in the 1990s: Collectivity and Hemispheric Solidarity

Formed in 1991, Los Crudos is a hardcore punk band from Chicago and has had various members throughout the years including Martín “Crudo” Sorrondeguy, José Casas, Juan Jiménez, Ebro Virumbrales, Oscar Chávez, Lenin, Mando, and Joel Martínez. Their lyrics, mostly in Spanish, deal with sociopolitical themes that affect the Latinx community such as racism, assimilation, xenophobia, imperialism, sexism, homophobia, classicism, and violence. While still continuously active, Los Crudos toured North and South America, Europe, and Asia (Los Crudos). While they “officially” disbanded in 1998, the band sporadically reunites to play shows in the US and Latin America as well as to play selective events. These include Latinx punk fests and an event organized by Martín, Desafinados, that took place in Los Crudos’s hometown of Pilsen, Chicago in 2016 to celebrate the band’s 25th anniversary and pay homage to the history of Latinx punk in the city with a multimedia exhibition, panels, and art events (Sorrondeguy, *Desafinados*).

Los Crudos utilize language in deliberate and purposeful ways to criticize hegemonic discourse through their performance of lyrics and on-stage dialogues. In the performance of “We’re that Spic Band” described above, Martín strategically utilizes English in select moments to directly address English-speaking crowd members and listeners in the dominant language of the punk rock community in the US to attack racial

oppression found in the subculture and mirroring that of broader American society. The lyrics of the song express the accumulated anger and backlash of Latinxs within the punk community and in wider society in response to centuries of subjugation, discrimination, and violence across North America by the dominant Anglo population. They enact a dialogue with the oppressor, in this case a racist punk, accusing them of white supremacy and fascist beliefs. Martín asks, “You say you call yourself a punk?,” demonstrating that for him, the very definition of the punk subculture and identity rejects oppressive discourses such as racism and fascism. The whole crowd responds to the rhetorical question in a unified, “Bullshit!,” emphasizing the powerful potential of the punk community in condemning hatefulness and discrimination (Sorrondéguy, *Beyond* 00:21:21-00:23:31).

After rejecting this literal and symbolic racist figure from the punk scene, associating them with larger histories of fascism and genocide and affirming their fear of the Latinx community, Martín appropriates the derogatory label, screaming, “We’re that spic band!” His use of the first-person plural “we” speaks not only for the Latinx community but is extended to anyone singing along and present at the live performance. This includes the seemingly Anglo crowdsurfer with whom Martín shares the microphone at the end of the song (Sorrondéguy, *Beyond* 00:21:21-00:23:31). The chorus strategically appropriates the racial slur “spic,” affirming the band’s identity as such.²²

The derogatory term has a long history of racist violence in the English language dating back to the early 20th century and the American workers who constructed the

²² The phrase “strategic essentialism” was coined by Gayatri Spivak in her book *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993). While this practice can reinscribe oppressive discourses of hegemonic society, it can also be useful in mobilizing marginalized and disenfranchised groups.

Panama Canal. As the story has it, the slur traveled north over the US-Mexican border, and in the 1990s, young Latinx artists started reclaiming the term in an effort to stimulate pride and empowerment (Vidal). “We’re that Spic Band” directly enters into this dialogue by affirming and reclaiming the slur in a sociocultural critique of oppressive discourses in the punk scene and beyond.

Martín Crudo’s performances, practices, and music described thus far, in which he redefines and diversifies what it means to be queer, Latinx, and punk, serve as the basis for a politics of collectivity and hemispheric solidarity in his work. In *Los Crudos*, Martín sings from an intersectional and socially conscious Latinx perspective to express the collective suffering of Latinx immigrants experiencing oppression in the US and within the Latinx community itself. In the song “¡No va haber revolución!,” he exposes the violence and injustices provoked by the cisheteropatriarchy and toxic masculinity:

Hasta que nos llegue el día que desaparezcan

Las marcas en los cuerpos de mujeres,

.....

Hasta que termine el rechazo a los homosexuales por amar libremente

.....

¡No va haber revolución!

Y las palabras que burlan y forman fronteras

Encerrando corazones deja al resto del mundo afuera (sic; *Los Crudos*)

Martín calls for a cultural “revolution” of oppressed peoples in opposition to violence perpetrated against minorities in a society dominated by a heteronormative patriarchal system. His desperation is expressed by his rough voice in the imperfect Spanish of a

Latinx immigrant or heritage speaker. By singing in Spanish, Los Crudos not only complicates the notion of punk as homogenized, but also declares the value of Spanish as a public and powerful language in a society dominated by English. In this way, these messages denouncing oppression can be accessed by the Spanish-speaking Latinx community, providing access to the, at times, unapproachable punk musical style and its powerful ideas. By using Spanish, Los Crudos are able to incite social consciousness and awareness of the pervasiveness of racism and homophobia to those not normally exposed to such ideas through punk.

Rather than defining “Latina/o/x” as categorical and clearly defined, Los Crudos and Martín engage in wider discussions that complicate its meaning. In *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (2003), Juana María Rodríguez responds to the problematics involved in the construction of what she calls *Latinidad* and writes, “Here different discourses of history, geography, and language collide. *Latinidad* serves to define a particular geopolitical experience but it also contains within it the complexities and contradictions of immigration, (post)(neo)colonialism, race, color, legal status, class, nation, language, and the politics of location” (10). In several of their songs, Los Crudos propose a hemispheric definition of Latinx by critically connecting oppression and marginalization with the postcolonial and neocolonial structures of global capitalism that continue to underlie heteronormative patriarchal and racist structures and neoliberal consumerism. In the song “500 Años,” Los Crudos expose and condemn the colonial oppression that Latin American subjects have suffered and that they themselves represent. Martín sings:

Quieren las frutas de nuestra tierra fina

nosotros nos destruyen con sus armas
con sus químicas, con su racismo
Para ellos no valemos nada somos como animales
500 años de la misma mierda
no importa de donde caiga
nos odian, no lo pueden esconder
Esto no para pero nosotros ya no aguantamos (sic; Los Crudos)

These lyrics refer directly to the fight for equality and liberty on behalf of the colonized peoples of the Américas that has lasted half a millennium, calling out the oppressors for treating them as less than human and destroying their lands. Los Crudos also attack the assimilationist ideology of capitalism in “Identidad Perdida”:

Quieres ser americano (capitalistas)
Sin ojos azules es muy difícil
Hay que parar a lo que pasa
y recoger lo que queda de nuestras razas (Los Crudos).

Here Martín criticizes the exclusivity of the supposed “American Dream,” inaccessible to those without Anglo-American features, as well as those assimilationist Latinxs who are allowing the US capitalist system to consume them.

In addition to attempting to build a hemispheric Latinx consciousness, Martín Crudo constructs a cultural memory through his multimedia work that serves to demonstrate how centuries of colonialism have resulted in existing hegemonic and heteronormative structures and discourses. As official history generally focuses on those in power and excludes minority subjects, calling attention to the forgotten and absent,

presenting alternative histories from the perspective of marginalized subjects, and their cultural expressions and representations can be powerful acts of resistance. Performances serve as a form of dialogue in collective processes, and by converting these into reflexive spaces, one can criticize politics and history from both outside and inside the community, in this case, Latinx and Latin American (Zavella 28-9). By employing certain performative tactics, Martín negotiates with his own history of colonialism and oppression to reject the oppressive forces of racism, sexism, classicism, and homophobia and reclaim his respective past in order to construct a historical memory for queer Latinx punks.

Martín and Los Crudos tap into the history of Latinx and Latin American music and culture by employing music as social protest, a practice familiar and relevant to many Latin Americans, forging connections to their ancestries and recognizing the injustices that Latinxs have suffered on both sides of the US-Mexican border. For example, *Beyond the Screams* features images of the infamous beating of migrants by Riverside Police in 1996, a traumatic historical moment in the cultural memory of many US Latinxs. Several memorable sequences of the beating are projected, in the background is a song by Latinx punk band Revolución X, and Martín narrates:

The general xenophobia that was in the US . . . It wasn't just a West Coast thing—wherever you were going you were being faced with these issues. And all of a sudden there was a lot to sing about, a lot to write about, a lot to talk about. [José Palafox, another Latinx punk, continues.] It's not just art for art's sake. It's stuff that's really important to us and we need to build a whole culture of resistance and punk rock. To me, hardcore is a part of that. (00:15:45-00:23:42)

By framing the abuse of Mexican migrants through the Riverside beating in the political atmosphere surrounding Latinxs in the US in the 1990s, the film presents police brutality and racialized violence as a consequence of colonialism, globalization, and nativism. Consequently, hardcore punk music is linked to a transnational political consciousness. Through this sequence, Martín commemorates the victims of the beating within an archive of Latinx cultural memory that contributes to his promotion of pan-Latinx solidarity (Zavella 37-8). Together with Alice Bag's narrative and online contributions, these archival practices forge important connections in conceiving of queer Latinx punk as a broader movement.

Similar to the way in which Alice Bag refers to her mother as the “original DIY-er” (10), *Beyond the Screams* highlights the importance of the DIY sensibility and ethic as a fundamental ideology and aesthetic in Los Crudos and the wider punk subculture, reflecting a manifestation of *rasquache* practices. This was an important strategy used by Los Crudos to make their political message more accessible to the marginalized Latinx community. Like the connections established with DIY practices that I analyze throughout this project, the use of traditional indigenous instruments in Latinx punk music also invokes the notion of *rasquache* through which a connection is established with the indigenous past that stands in opposition to capitalism and consumerism. Moreover, these practices contrast with the traditional punk musical style that has its origins in contemporary Western culture, characterized by sounds modified by technology such as guitar distortion. *Beyond the Screams* features a scene that depicts such non-Western practices in which a young Latinx punk plays a *concha* during a punk performance. The soft sound of the conch contrasts with the aggressive and rough

instrumentation typical of the punk rock genre, forming a hybrid sound that breaks with traditional Western musical structures.

By putting punk performance in dialogue with hemispheric American indigenous discourses, Martín situates it within a tradition of Latinx political activism and calls for pan-Latinx solidarity, allowing him to confront and dispute hegemonic notions and oppressions (Zavella 29-30). In his documentary, Martín explains, “To us being punk didn’t mean letting go of these ties that we have to our parents, or to our families, to where we’re from, or to our language. It didn’t mean breaking away from that; it means working with them to try to get somewhere, to get to a new level” (Sorrondéguy, *Beyond* 00:25:30-00:25:49). Martín creates space for his Latin American heritage and culture to co-exist and intertwine with his political beliefs and participation in the punk scene, maintaining connections with queer Latinx punk and influential Latinx and Latin American social movements throughout the hemisphere.

To actively take on nationalist politics, homophobia, institutional violence, and the policing of (literal and figurative) borders, Martín Crudo seeks to create a sense of hemispheric collective consciousness. In the Los Crudos’s song “Sin Caras,” Martín does this by uniting in solidarity with undocumented immigrants in the US. He screams:

Nosotros somos sin caras

No tenemos papeles ni derechos

No pueden oír nuestras voces

Pero nunca dejamos de gritar (Los Crudos)

Singing in Spanish from an imagined “we,” Martín invokes solidarity between immigrants to arm the community with a powerful voice against colonial and neocolonial

oppressions. He then deliberately changes to English so that Anglo-Americans can understand the battle cry, “We’re not your wetbacks anymore!,” employing the derogatory term to defy the neocolonialist oppressor (Los Crudos). Martín never hesitates in the idealist inclusivity of his message, extending comradeship to the Spanish-speaking gay community in “A los inseguros,” and spreading these messages in Spanish to punks across four continents through touring. Armed with lyrics that express solidarity in an imagined pan-Latinx community in a shared fight against their oppressors as well as with performances that incorporate people from different races, ethnicities, genders, and sexualities, Martín re-appropriates the ethics, style, and sound of the punk rock subculture to incite a cultural revolution that transcends local and national borders.

Limp Wrist and Gender-Bending Performances



Fig. 1. Photograph of Limp Wrist Performance; Angela Owens, *Angela Owens: Photojournalist*, 2018, angelaxowens.com/blog/damagedcity2018/saturday. PNG file.

Shortly after Los Crudos formally disbanded in 1998, Martín publicly came out as gay and formed a queercore band called Limp Wrist, which tackled social issues and

oppressive discourses and structures affecting the LGBTQ community within punk and mainstream US culture, including homophobia, toxic masculinity, racism, and capitalism. While he focused on ethnic difference within punk as the vocalist of Los Crudos, Martín directed his attention to gender and sexuality in Limp Wrist. The band identified as queercore or homocore, a term that emerged during the mid-1980s among outspoken gay zinesters. Into the 1990s, queercore developed into a movement within punk that sought to challenge through humor and DIY practices the hegemonic definitions of gender and sexuality propagated by capitalist and religious institutions and discourses (Rathe). Limp Wrist formed in 1998 with members from both Chicago and Albany, including Martín Crudo on vocals as well as Scott Moore, Andrew Martini, Paul Henry, and formerly, Mark Telfian. Through exaggerated, excessive, and offensive lyrics and performance, they exposed and condemned racial, gender and sexual oppressions within punk and dominant gay communities and criticized the cisheterosexist and masculinist discourses and practices of hardcore punk (see fig. 1).

Similar to the way in which Los Crudos's use of language and performance reveals and challenges racism within the punk community, Limp Wrist uses subversive humor and wordplay to address racism within the mainstream gay community in the song "You Ain't That Fierce":

Fuck your pride, which you scream so loud
Same old race shit
If there is no room for all
then there's no need to be proud
Salsa, rice and dinge queens are some of the terms

And honey, like the hottest of chilies, I'll make your ass burn (Limp Wrist)

In this song, Martín criticizes and rejects hegemonic gay pride for its problematic relationship with race and its lack of diversity. The lyrics demonstrate a critique that oscillates between biting and comical to denounce the way in which labels such as salsa, rice, and dinge queens, or gay, (usually) white men who are attracted to Latinx, Asian, or African American men, are used as a superficial and problematic strategy for inclusion. Through this raw humor, Martín mocks racist tokenizing masked as inclusion that represents another manifestation of racist discourses in the US. Like in “We’re that Spic Band,” he assumes the essentialized category and enters into dialogue with the representation of that which he is criticizing. In this case, he appropriates the role of the “salsa queen” by personifying the chili and satirically threatening to use his “Latin heat” to cause pain while penetrating the symbolic figure of hegemonic (white) gay pride.

As a queer Latinx punk, Martín Crudo resists categorization, never quite fitting into prescribed roles of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or punk. He instead creates different spaces in which he can explore and play with these different identity constructions throughout his different projects, allowing for his fluidity to exist freely and to overflow. In *Queer Latinidad*, Rodríguez discusses the complexities of definitions and language surrounding queerness and constructions of gender and sexuality within Latinx cultures. She argues that queer *Latinidad*, “demands a practice that moves across geographic, linguistic, and imaginary borders” (30). Just as she employs the term *Latinidad* to stress difference rather than the English construct “Latina/o” used more often as an umbrella term, she addresses the cultural and linguistic specificity of queer and the associated terms in Spanish, none of which, she argues, serve as a direct

translation for the “challenge to constructions of heteronormativity” that queer embodies. She instead stresses the idea of “excesses of categories,” in an attempt to shed new light on the compound construction of queer *Latinidad*, undergoing a rhizomatic process that she deems “Que(e)ring *Latinidad*, highlighting ‘and’ over ‘is’ as a way to think about differences” (22). Rodríguez’s theory serves as a helpful framework for the complex experiences and multiple positionalities represented by Martín Crudo. Rather than obliging an interpretation of his work in *Los Crudos* and *Limp Wrist* that focuses on separate explorations of his multiple subjectivities, queer *Latinidad* allows us to re-evaluate the implied categorization and create space for a more fluid understanding of identitarian categories, which includes cultural and linguistic differences.

Limp Wrist’s lyrically cutting critiques of power structures and subversion of normative discourses are emphasized by parodic and provocative gender-bending performances. The band’s scantily-clad on-stage uniform consists of undergarments and clothing associated with fetish culture and kink, such as police uniforms and leather garments, chaps, and harnesses. Limp Wrist employs this campy performance to emphasize and magnify the performative nature of gender and identity by representing the sexual stereotypes associated with mainstream gay culture. While these performances are similar to camp in that they emphasize exaggeration, excess, and shock, a farce whose existence is temporary and melodramatic that is based in the constructed categories that it seeks to subvert, they focus on destabilizing masculinity rather than camp’s traditional focus on femininity (Cleto 35-6). Halberstam offers the critical concept of “kinging” as an alternative to camp and drag. In her analysis of El Vez’s performances, Habell-Pallán invokes Halberstam in describing this practice:

Kinging, according to Halberstam, is different from camp in the following way.

While both camp and kinging are about flamboyant, hyperbolic, performances of gender, camp refers historically to parody of femininity, while kinging refers to parody of masculinity. Different from male impersonation, which strives for the appearance of realness, kinging is the practice of making masculinity theatrical, of exposing masculinity as a construct. Its goal is to denaturalize masculinity.

Kinging counters “the idea that masculinity ‘just is,’ whereas femininity reeks of the ‘artificial.’” (99)

Limp Wrist employs this performance of “kinging” not only as a form of “self-fashioning” that disrupts the normative dress codes of both dominant hegemonic society and that of the punk scene, but as a way of denaturalizing various stereotypes of masculinity in its critique of gay, punk, and masculine aesthetics.

Limp Wrist performances in fetish and bondage wear could be understood as disidentifications (Muñoz) with the fashion historically associated with both punk and gay cultures. In the US, leather subcultures date back to World War II veterans and motorcycle gangs of the 1950s (Barrett 29). A few decades later, Malcolm McLaren, promoter and manager of 1970s punk bands in England, and designer Vivienne Westwood supplied the fashion most famously for the Sex Pistols out of their boutique SEX. Inspired by the restrictive BDSM clothing style seen in leather subcultures, they sold garments customized with chains, studs, zippers, rips, and most famously, bondage pants. Punks turned this clothing into a political statement (Price). By embracing these styles in their performances, Limp Wrist neither assimilates to nor opposes these discourses, but rather disidentifies with them by re-appropriating and transforming the

cultural logics that commodify fetish and punk cultures that had distanced them from their original resistant potential. In this way, Martín performs resistance to social norms and regulatory systems that impose restrictive and oppressive ideologies both within mainstream punk and gay cultures.

Limp Wrist's hyper-sexualized performative tactics complement the band's sharp critiques of the hyper-masculinist and patriarchal mentalities that permeate punk and hardcore scenes. The fear and violence against gay and female punks throughout the history of the subculture is described in several songs, such as "Back in the Days," which invokes and challenges the stereotypical punk who is nostalgic for the past when music and punk fans were supposedly better or more authentic. In other songs, such as "Man to Man," Martín inverts the violence and bravado of stereotypical masculinity and exposes and denounces cissexism, toxic masculinity, and homophobia:

You're such a man
Hold your dick up above your head
Walk this town with your tough friends
You're all such men
You talk of "chicks" that they're all sluts
I've got some girlfriends that could kill you fucks
.....
Inherited passed-down ignorance
You wear it well and proud
Up in your face, now run home to daddy
And tell him you got your ass kicked

by some fag! (Limp Wrist)

Martín threatens the fragile masculinity of hardcore fans with tough, aggressive women and gays, nonnormative figures that problematize dominant cisheteronormative notions of gender. Through inversion and humor, Martín exposes the instability of prescribed gender roles and sexuality and caricatures homophobia.

Performance and Graphic Art

Whereas Martín's music and performances are important contributions to my exploration of queer Latinx punk, one of the goals of this project is to approach punk as a subculture characterized by its multimedia cultural production. Imagery on merchandise including album art, designs reproduced on t-shirts, patches, and pins, and ephemeral show fliers are often overlooked by scholars who consider them as little more than marketing tools. However, the imagery associated with bands is also important for its artistic and political value, be it displayed on walls and bodies or stored in bedrooms and basements in private collections. This section will explore Martín's graphic work for Los Crudos and Limp Wrist that, despite the bands' official dissolution, still circulates in record shops and swaps or is traded and resold among punks. Martín's graphic style in his album artwork, merchandise designs, and show flyers, many of which are created or preserved as prints, is characterized by its reliance on line or tone rather than on color. The images are mostly black and white or grayscale, many times incorporating altered photographs or layered images to which he can modify parts or add color as he uses them for different products or events. The clarity of the images is generally very gritty in its Xerox aesthetic that retains associations with DIY practices and ideologies. The aesthetic

is also functional in that it supports easy reproduction of subversive meanings. I will begin by discussing punk performance and practices at live shows to set the stage for my presentation of a series of images that represent several important overarching themes that characterize his graphic works. These include images from different sources that he reworks to create new meanings and associations, including critiques of gender stereotypes in hardcore punk, transnational histories of resistance, and loaded political imagery from throughout the hemisphere.

Concerts in the punk scene, or punk shows, differ from those of mainstream music in that participation is not only encouraged, it is found at the heart of the event. The punk rock scene is filled with overtly masculine rituals and an abundance of young men embracing gang mentalities. The movement of sweaty bodies while they enact “pile-ons”²³ and “stage-diving,”²⁴ or when they dance in the “circle-pit,” “mosh,” “slam-dance,” “two-step,” and “pogo,”²⁵ produces an extremely aggressive, passionate, and masculinized atmosphere. As an active member in hardcore punk scenes for many years, Martín Crudo in much of his graphic work reads this performance space through a queer lens, viewing these interactions as homoerotic. In an interview with *Queer Youth TV*

²³ A pile-on is when a group of participants climb on top of one another in a pile to reach the microphone and sing in unison.

²⁴ Stage-diving is when participants dive off the stage and into the crowd, usually physically supported by their fellow participants. Stage-divers climb onto the stage via crowd-surfing, scaling another person’s body, or simply climbing up from the floor. Stage-diving usually only happens at punk shows where there is no barrier between the floor and the stage.

²⁵ These terms are all varying styles of dancing found in punk and hardcore scenes. A circle pit is when participants dance in a circle in the middle of the crowd. Moshing is an aggressive dancing style in which participants push or slam into one another. Moshing is also a more general term used to describe punk and hardcore dancing that happens in the pit. When dancing pogo, participants jump up and down with their torso stiff, their arms rigid, and their legs together. Two-step is a dance in which the participant bounces and steps at the same time to the beat of the music.

about the queercore movement, Martín explains his queer perspective on live punk performance during a live show with his band Limp Wrist:

And this thing that happens with the pile-ups and the stage-diving, I know some people who are like “oh, that’s lame, you know I can’t get close” [to the stage], but we love it ‘cause we grab ass, we grab ass, we grab dick, we love all that fuckin’ shit . . . It’s about liberating ourselves. It’s about not being afraid to touch another man, a woman touching a woman, it’s about . . . breaking those boundaries and being like okay let’s not put up this front that “oh I’m just dancing bro.” Bullshit you’re getting close to a man and you love it, so let’s go. (Hinton 00:06:05-00:06:33)

In his 1997 article, “Mapping Subversion: Queercore Music’s Playful Discourse of Resistance,” D. Robert DeChaine reads the queercore movement in the context of Bakhtin’s theories on the carnivalesque to describe “a sensibility of play” in queercore performance and spaces. In his article, “Redefining the Body Electric: Queering Punk and Hardcore,” David Ensminger describes the conflicted history of queer and punk cultures, and briefly mentions Limp Wrist’s use of parody in their performances and lyrics. However, queer moves beyond the typical macho rituals of punk with which it establishes initial dialogues, to spaces of excess and festive subversion or parodic performance, thereby destabilizing dominant constructs and socially acceptable interactions by exposing their homoerotic tendencies.

In the space of the punk show, social norms surrounding personal space and the exchange of bodily fluids such as sweat and blood are challenged, as seen in the contact between bodies and other practices such as the accepted tendency of many singers to spit

into the audience as part of the experience. Judith Butler analyzes the social norms surrounding bodily fluids in the context of corporal limits and the abject as an instrument of exclusion in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990).

According to Butler, bodies are inscribed with permeable limits that reflect hegemonic ideologies of social structures. She explains that the homophobic perception of homosexuality as unnatural or uncivilized is based on the perceived contamination of the subject upon exposing or breaking free of these corporal limits or borders. Martín Crudo eroticizes the excessive physical contact in the masculinized hardcore punk scene in an article with *Suburban Voice*:

We enjoyed . . . how these boys were tackling each other, rolling on each other. I mean, that was like dry-humping for us (laughter). It really was. I mean we were watching boys, we were teaming up on boys that kept going after the same guy, constantly and, it was like, should we give them the van keys and let them use it for a while? (qtd. in Ensminger, *Left*: 63)

The singer of Los Crudos and Limp Wrist playfully exposes the accepted norms surrounding physical contact in punk performance to shed light on subtle and perhaps even unconscious homoerotic tendencies embedded in certain rituals. In this way, he uses parody to confront homophobic inclinations in the punk scene and embraces the potentiality of a liminal alternative space in which an existence outside of oppressive forces of dominant hegemonic structures could be possible, or at least imagined.

Martín parodies the stereotypes surrounding hardcore punk to expose its homoerotic tendencies in the lyrics to Limp Wrist's song, "Cruisin' at the Show," in which he sings:

You look good with your youth crew wear
Shaved head tough face and your Revelation gear
I saw you from across the pit
Your eyes looked into mine and we nodded
Cuz we both wanted it (Limp Wrist)

Here Martín uses humor to expose and exploit exaggerated masculine rituals and gender norms typically associated with the youth crew subsect of hardcore punk born in the late 1980s and early 1990s in New York and other cities around the US. Youth crew bands and their fans typically identified with a strict moral outlook reflected in their “PMA,” or positive mental attitude slogan, and they defended rigid ideologies and ethical stances such as straight edge and vegetarian or vegan lifestyles. Their fashion intentionally diverged from the more conventional skinhead look of the era’s hardcore scene, embracing crewcuts, athletic or military gear, and clothing bearing band or straight edge logos.

Martín employs and parodies these youth crew tropes in several iconic images he created for Limp Wrist. He explains his process in the interview with *Queer Youth TV*, “we would get these fliers and record covers with the really beefed-up drawings of boys, and we were like, uhhh this is so fuckin’ hot, right” (Hinton 00:05:57-00:06:05). Mixing punk imagery with the inspiration of Tom of Finland, or Touko Laaksonen, the Finnish artist known for his stylized highly masculinized and fetishized homoerotic illustrations and his impact on late 20th century gay culture, Martín queers typical punk and hardcore iconography, placing Tom of Finland’s idealized masculine figures that combine realism and fantasy in direct dialogue with images of hardcore punks. One of the more popular

images in the album artwork for Limp Wrist's 1999 release, *Out of the Closet and into the Pit*, features an idealized masculine body from biceps to thighs mimicking the graphic style made famous by Tom of Finland (see fig. 2). The muscular figure wears tight fitting clothes to show off his chiseled arms and the outline of a large erect penis, his tank top bearing the logo for Judge, a militant straight edge hardcore band from New York. In his hands, he holds a large sledgehammer, playing off the sledgehammers that form an "X" behind a banner that reads Judge in their iconic logo, and mirroring the positioning of the exaggerated muscular figures in Tom of Finland's "Men of the Forest" series (1957) who ride logs down a cloudy river with spears in their hands (see fig 3). Martín's figure intensifies the embedded sexual innuendos of the spear in replacing it with a hammer to insinuate aggressive penetration or "hammering." He also wears heavy duty safety gloves that bear an "X," symbolizing identification with the straight edge ideology²⁶ and reproducing one of its iconic images, an "X-ed" fist. The "X" as a straight edge symbol originates from the "X" that is drawn on the hands of minors with a black permanent marker upon entering all-ages punk shows where alcohol is served to prevent underage drinking. In the image, the band name xLIMP WRISTx cuts off the figure's body above the chest, and the name of the album *Out of the Closet and into the Pit* runs across the bottom. This image reveals an intermedial relationship between semiotic meanings which queers the masculinized aggression associated with hardcore punk and straight edge. Furthermore, by coming "out of the closet and into the pit," Martín identifies the sexual tensions in the hardcore space of "the pit," while his headless idyllic male hardcore

²⁶ The straight edge, or sXe, ideology and lifestyle originated in the 1980s in the east coast hardcore scene and promoted a clean lifestyle by abstaining from drugs, alcohol, and even sex, although the latter is interpreted in a more flexible way. The practices of straight edge hardcore punk fans can be interpreted as an alternative form of rebellion in the scene (Mullaney 385-6).

figure, void of individuality and emotions, threatens the fragile masculinity and cisheteropatriarchal structures embedded in punk with sexual aggression.

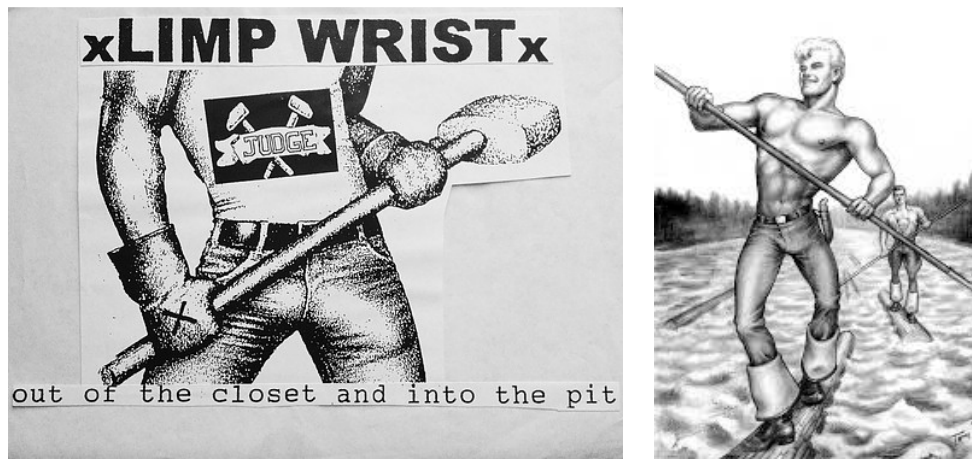


Fig. 2. Limp Wrist: Out of the Closet and in the Pit; Martín Sorrondeguy, 1999, martinsorrondeguy.com/about1?lightbox=imagexwb. JPEG file.

Fig. 3. Touko Laaksonen/Tom of Finland, *Men of the Forest Series*; 1957 tomoffinlandfoundation.org/foundation/Events/images_2012/ev_2012_08_19_Sweden57_03.jpg. JPEG file.

Several other images created by Martín to support the *Out of the Closet and into the Pit* album employ similar semiotic tactics, including one that features two male backsides with the excessively round cheeks characteristic of Tom of Finland (see fig. 4). The figure on the left is dressed in a black suit, the right one in a white suit, and both have a round opening in their pants in the middle of their rear ends, exposing skin. Each figure grabs the other's cheek, their hands marked with "X's" and their fingers penetrating each other's exposed anuses. Another iconic Limp Wrist image that incorporates straight-edge and hardcore punk ideologies and symbols is of an "X-ed" fist with the letters "H-O-M-O," which dialogues with the ubiquitous hardcore punk image that incorporates letters in each of the v's formed by the "X," such as "D-C-H-C," to represent hardcore music from Washington, DC. By intertwining queer references with

widely recognized macho hardcore punk iconography, Martín challenges the cisheterosexism of the hardcore punk scene. Not only are these images found in spaces designated for punk rock participants, they are also exhibited in public spaces where they confront the tensions surrounding binary notions of sexuality and expose the inherent flaws in binary categories and constructions imposed by dominant cisheteronormative structures.



Fig. 4. Limp Wrist: Out of the Closet and in the Pit, Philly 6/13/99; Martín Sorrondeguy, 1999, [discogs.com/xLimp-Wristx-Out-Of-The-Closet-And-Into-The-Pit-Philly-61399/release/7513595#images/20071435](https://www.discogs.com/xLimp-Wristx-Out-Of-The-Closet-And-Into-The-Pit-Philly-61399/release/7513595#images/20071435). JPEG file.

Several Limp Wrist images incorporate photography with collage to boldly challenge dominant notions of sexuality in hardcore punk scenes. The cover of Limp Wrist's 2000 release *Don't Knock It Til You Try It* features two men with their eyes closed embracing in a passionate kiss with "X LIMP WRIST X" along the top and "don't Knock iT tiL You Try iT" diagonally in typewriter style lettering along one figure's arm (see fig. 5). The right figure's arm bearing the album name forms one side of a triangle that draws the eye up his forearm and around the other man's head, leading the viewer to participate in the embrace as their hands passionately grip each other's heads. The album

name juxtaposed with the desiring embrace of two men with shaved heads, emulating the style of mainstream hardcore masculinity, challenges binary notions of sexuality and complicates narratives surrounding masculinity, socialization, and desire. In her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explores the notion of a continuum between homosociality and homosexuality, reminiscent of Adrienne Rich's theories on the "lesbian continuum" that she proposes in her 1980 article "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." Sedgwick's terming of "male homosocial desire" in regard to the frequent coexistence of male bonding and homophobia is a useful lens through which to read Limp Wrist imagery to frame the context in which the semiotic exchange in Martín's works resides. By forcefully inserting homoerotic desire into discourses surrounding punk, works such as this one playfully invite participants to question their normative sexuality. Through the playful subversion of the practices, interactions, and relationships that characterize punk shows, Martín and Limp Wrist transform Sedgwick's notion of homosocial bonding into a more explicit critical commentary on punk and masculinity.

Another image in a similar style depicts two men engaging in oral sex with the lyrics and song title "I Love Hardcore Boys, I Love Boys Hardcore" in a horizontal bar that overlays the graphic photograph (see fig. 6). The figure to the left is undressed, his body from the thigh up inclined and leaning to the left, cutting across the frame as he grabs the head of the other figure face down who is performing fellatio. The composition of this image also invites the viewer to participate in the movement of the two men, their bodies drawing the eye up to the top figure's body and his affective facial expression of pleasure, then to the right down the unevenly placed letters of LIMP WRIST, and back

down to the bottom figure's face down head. The song title and chorus "I love hardcore boys, I love boys hardcore" uses humor and wordplay to queer discourses surrounding hardcore punk masculinity, a line that when performed live, implicates all the participants to performatively embrace nonnormative sexual desires.



Fig. 5. Limp Wrist: Cover of Don't Knock It 'Til You Try It; Martín Sorrondeguy, 2000, discogs.com/Limp-Wrist-Don't-Knock-It-Til-You-Try-It/release/3849031#images/7471408. JPEG file.

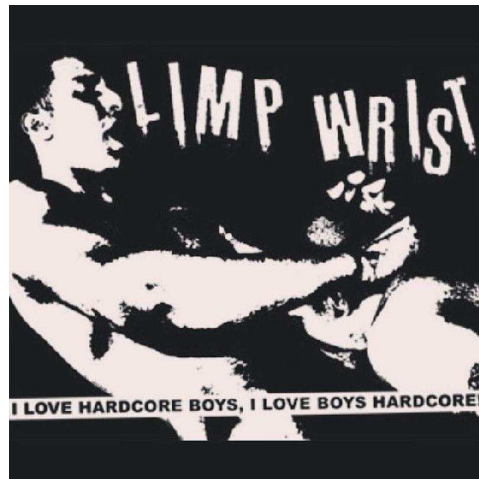


Fig. 6. Limp Wrist: I Love Hardcore Boys, I Love Boys Hardcore; Martín Sorrondeguy, 2001, t2.genius.com/unsafe/221x221/https%3A%2F%2Fimages.genius.com%2F9259d6a721a3e5fa7af6d6362d079bb7.800x800x1.jpg. JPEG file.

Another Tom of Finland trope with which Martín's graphic works dialogue is the image of the police officer, fashioned in the style of the leatherman subculture (see fig. 7). In his book *From Drag Queens to Leatherman: Language, Gender, and Gay Male Subcultures* (2017), Rusty Barrett posits a rift between the "Old Guard" era of leatherman in the late 1940s, when gay men in the military returned from their service during World War II, and the "New Guard" of the mid-1970s, which diverges from the traditions of Old Guard leather culture. Rejecting the effeminacy associated with homosexuality of the era, many war veterans organized motorcycle clubs in large cities to emphasize their

masculinity. Leather and biker bars served as spaces in which these men could express their masculinized homosexuality, juxtaposing “the stance of rebellious defiance symbolized by ‘outlaw’ motorcycle gangs with the indexically incongruous context of an ordered and regulatory military organization,” reflecting embedded discourses of nationalism, patriotism, and civic responsibility alongside nonnormative sexual practices (185). Following the Stonewall uprisings in New York City in 1969 and the gay rights movement in the 1970s, the leatherman subculture gained popularity, and “clones” or gay men who perpetrated stereotypes surrounding homosexuality started to appropriate symbols of leatherman identity despite having no serious interest in BDSM sex or fetishism, as seen in the Village People. The New Guard of leatherman culture is understood as having a more liberal view of sexual and social roles as well as being more open to nontraditional forms of leather clothing, versus the more conservative Old Guard that approached leather culture as a quasi-military institution with highly regulated social behavior (185-6).

In an image emulating the positioning and framing of one of Tom of Finland’s police officer images, Martín depicts the bust of a man dressed in leatherman apparel with BDSM leather straps around his shoulders, a thick mustache, and a police hat worn low to shadow his eyes (see fig. 8). Among other places, this image appeared on a flier for a Limp Wrist show in Mexico City. The background is covered by the phrase “JOTOS, MARICAS, TRANSEXUALES, RAROS, PUNKS, Y OTRAS MENTES PERTURBADAS” repeated horizontally, continuing down to where the background meets the figure’s bust. While similar in subject matter, style, and composition to the Tom of Finland image, Martín’s police officer lacks the gentle erotic look in his eye and

the hyper realistic style. Martín opts instead for a more aggressive and militant expression and his signature DIY Xerox aesthetic. The categories listed on the background in Spanish decenter Tom of Finland's focus on Western male beauty standards, link the common struggles of multiply marginalized groups and social outsiders, and destabilize limiting Western definitions of gender, sexuality, and desire. Furthermore, by appropriating discourses surrounding police and the legal system, the image comments on the policing of queer and brown bodies and wider injustices perpetrated by legal institutions and the prison industrial complex.



Fig. 7. Tom of Finland Police Officer; Touko Laaksonen/Tom of Finland, 1984, Tom of Finland Foundation, static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/thumbnails/image/2016/09/21/08/tom-of-finland-crop.jpg?width=736&height=490&fit=bounds&format=pjpg&auto=webp&quality=70. JPEG file.

Fig. 8. Limp Wrist Show Flyer, Mexico City, D.F.; Martín Sorrondeguy, 2018, facebook.com/53115536388/photos/a.492273401388/10155142394906389/?type=3&theater. JPEG file.

While much of Martín's graphic work uses a queer lens to disrupt dominant narratives surrounding punk, he also uses this medium to make bold interventions into widespread Western ideologies and constructs such as religion and the nation. One striking image features a gender nonconforming figure dressed only in platform stiletto heels, fishnet thigh highs, and a crop top, with their nipples, penis, and messy pubic hair exposed (see fig. 9). With fake eyelashes covering their closed eyes, mouth open, and head back, the figure stands on the band name with their legs spread holding a sign in each hand that reads "FAGS HATE GOD." In employing an offensive term used to oppress homosexual men in attributing effeminacy and weakness as negative qualities, this contentious image represents a rejection of organized religions that have historically excluded and persecuted those that embrace nonnormative sexual practices and identifications.

Two particularly powerful images that incorporate geopolitical and nationalist symbols to critique injustices suffered by immigrants and Latin Americans perpetrated by US imperialism include the cover of the unofficial release of Limp Wrist's album *Live in 924 Gilman St.* (2008) and the cover of a Brazilian pressing of their self-titled album (2011) for a South American tour. The first image features the body from the thighs up of an eroticized Statue of Liberty from a low angle perspective (see fig. 10). The statue's robes are open, exposing six-pack abs and a flaccid penis. By queering and eroticizing this quintessential American symbol of freedom, democracy, and justice that welcomed millions of immigrants and refugees to the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Martín intervenes into contemporary nationalist discourses surrounding immigration policy and the mythical American dream. The second image is equally as scandalous,

depicting a shirtless mohawked male punk performing fellatio on a map of South America, with a penile shaft in the place of Central America (see fig. 11). With South America penetrating the mouth of a seemingly white male punk, this image comments on the tumultuous history of US and Latin American relations as South America takes revenge on the brutal effects of US imperialism suffered by so many Latin American countries in playing the role of the receiver of oral pleasure. With the US as the giver of pleasure, inverting the North-South power relationship through a satirical queer lens, this image intervenes into discourses surrounding the direction of the flows of cultural capital throughout the hemisphere, challenging the exclusivity and erasure of dominant punk narratives that center the US and England.

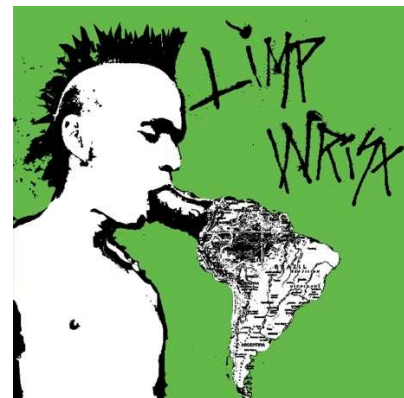
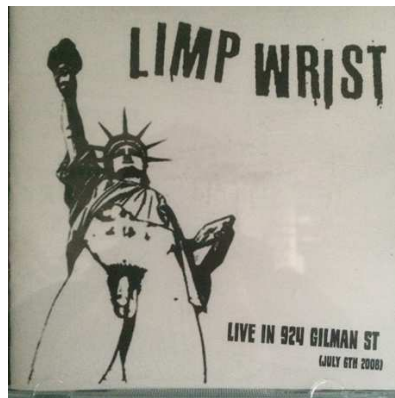


Fig. 9. Limp Wrist: Fags Hate God; Martín Sorrondeguy, revhq.com/images/covers/250/bdskss06.jpg. JPEG file.

Fig. 10. Limp Wrist: Cover of *Live in 924 Gilman St.*, (Unofficial release); Martín Sorrondeguy, 6 July 2008, discogs.com/Limp-Wrist-Live-In-924-Gilman-St/release/7596003. JPEG file.

Fig. 11. Limp Wrist: Cover of *Limp Wrist* LP for Brazilian Tour; Martín Sorrondeguy, *Limp Wrist 12*", 2011, Nada Nada Discos, Brazil. nadanadadiscos.bandcamp.com/album/limp-wrist-12. JPEG file.

Whereas in the Limp Wrist artwork as well as in lyrics and performances Martín employs humor as a subversive strategy, the album and merchandise artwork for Los Crudos reflects the serious political content of the band. Images portraying violence

against indigenous Latin Americans, authoritarian police presences, and depictions of resistance adorn their album covers and other artwork. The covers of the *Las Injusticias Caen Como Pesadillas 7"* (1994) and the *La Rabia Nubla Nuestros Ojos... 7"* (1993) portray sheer affective terror at the hands of oppression. The latter is a collage that features a group of men beating another man in black and white, the background overlaid with a red fence that crosses diagonally and shoots back toward the upper right corner of the frame (fig. 12). There is a young girl crying, horizontally placed on the fence in the upper left-hand corner, and another child in the foreground overlaid in yellow. She is looking at the viewer with her mouth open wide as if screaming, and she holds a newspaper with the album title written on it that reads "LA RABIA NUBLA NUESTROS OJOS..." The band name is slightly above and to the right of the center, also overlaid with yellow. The album name declares the anger amidst oppression and violence but also implicates the viewer in the ignorance that results from being blinded by rage with the use of the first-person plural, a newspaper article headline that serves as a public outcry for political awakening.

The cover of *Las Injusticias Caen Como Pesadillas 7"* represents two figures with indigenous features, a woman and a young boy in grayscale in front of a yellow background splashed with red insinuating blood splatter (see fig. 13). On the right, the woman covers her face and mouth with a shawl and reaches out her right hand to cover the boy's face, their facial expressions and faraway gazes suggesting grave fear. The cover of the *Cobardes 7"* (2013) presents a collage of military dictators overlapping as if they were in a crowd, all bearing the hard look of cold indifference that characterizes images of tyrannical leaders (see fig. 14). The gray scale image is overlaid with pinkish

hues, recreating the effect of a red-light glow, contributing to the disturbing and alarming tone of the work.



Fig. 12. Los Crudos: Cover of *La Rabia Nubla Nuestros Ojos... 7"*; Martín Sorrondeguy, 1993, Lengua Armada Discos, [discogs.com/Los-Crudos-La-Rabia-Nubla-Nuestros-Ojos-/release/2884026](https://www.discogs.com/Los-Crudos-La-Rabia-Nubla-Nuestros-Ojos-/release/2884026). JPEG file.

Fig. 13. Los Crudos: Cover of *Las Injusticias Caen Como Pesadillas 7"*; Martín Sorrondeguy, 1994, Lengua Armada Discos, [discogs.com/Los-Crudos-Las-Injusticias-Caen-Como-Pesadillas-/release/1494740](https://www.discogs.com/Los-Crudos-Las-Injusticias-Caen-Como-Pesadillas-/release/1494740). JPEG file.

Martín employs a similar strategy in the image that adorns the cover for the Los Crudos/Huasipongo 7" split record, *Nunca Nada Cambia... A Menos Que Lo Hagamos Cambiar* (1993), which depicts a group of military men in gray scale walking through the middle of a street armed with assault rifles and combat helmets, authoritatively dominating the public space as civilians watch from open shops on the sidelines. Martín uses this same image for a Los Crudos print, but crops it so that the two military figures in the foreground occupy the majority of the composition, and instead of grayscale, the image is printed in varying degrees of red (see fig. 15). The song name and a verse from "Asesinos" takes up the bottom right quadrant of the print and reads:

Matan a la gente y no tienen verguenza

Preguntamos lo que pasa; pero se quedan callados,

Cubren la evidencia y nos siguen mintiendo,

Crean que no nos damos cuenta de que son: ASESINOS! (Los Crudos)

Through these bold images, Martín critiques the longstanding oppression and violence suffered at the hands of military dictatorships throughout Latin America, the red overlays suggesting that the blood is on their hands.



Fig. 14. Los Crudos: Cover of *Los Cobardes* 7"; Martín Sorrondeguy, 2013, Nada Nada Discos, discogs.com/Crudos-Cobardes/release/4670391. JPEG image.

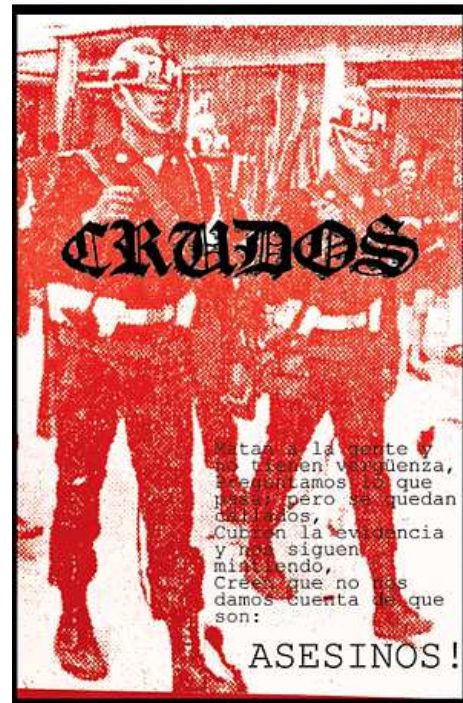


Fig. 15. Los Crudos: Poster: Damaged City Fest, D.C.; martinsorrondeguy.com/about1?lightbox=imagerk8. PNG image.

The most iconic image associated with Los Crudos originally circulated on band merchandise including t-shirts and patches, and more recently adorned the cover of the double LP discography that was released in 2015 as a fundraiser for *Maximum Rocknroll* punk zine (see fig. 16). The image presents five male figures with indigenous features standing face front from a low angle perspective. The man in the center wears a black cape with a white collar, reminiscent of clerical clothing, and a black *charro* hat. His

head leans slightly back, his arms are outstretched with palms up as if in a spiritual stance, and his closed eyes and facial expression emit tranquility. The other four men are dressed as farmers and stand behind him with serious faces as if in solidarity. The positioning of the figures in this image and the *campesinos* evoke the stern photographs of Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, a powerful symbol of equity and social justice in Mexico. However, the dress of the main figure and the lack of weapons suggest a divergence from this interpretation. The combination of his clerical collar and physical resemblance to Samuel Ruiz García, the Mexican Roman Catholic bishop who served in Chiapas, Mexico, from 1960 until 1999, establishes interesting links with his legacy as mediator during the conflict between the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Ruiz García helped hundreds of thousands of poor indigenous Mayans in Chiapas after being inspired by Liberation Theology and redefining evangelization methods in his diocese to abandon practices of Europeanizing indigenous peoples. He instead worked to incorporate his religious teachings within the local indigenous cultural traditions, and his pastoral practices and consciousness-building strategies are thought to be one of the roots of the Zapatista Uprising of 1994 (Morton).

As an image that adorned Los Crudos merchandise, it was accompanied by the words “ILEGAL Y QUÉ?,” the term “*ilegal*” employed strategically to confront and challenge racist and xenophobic anti-immigrant discourses rampant in the US (see fig. 17). While none of the members of Los Crudos are undocumented, this provocative phrase suggests solidarity with other immigrants, documented or undocumented, and anyone perceived to be Latinx. The juxtaposition of the image and text draws important links

between transnational histories of grassroots community organizing and activism, non-Western religious ideologies and practices, and the current struggles of Latinx communities in the US, confronting the public on a human level and asking the provocative question “¿y qué?”

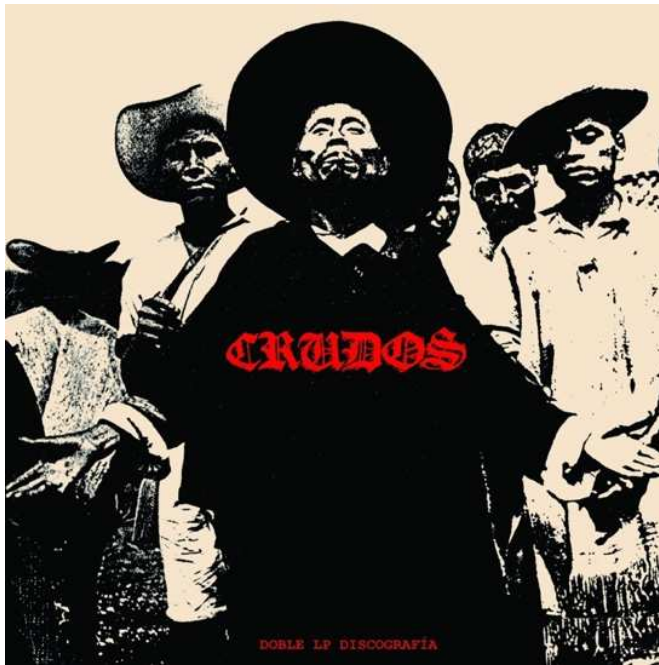


Fig. 16. Los Crudos: Cover of *Doble LP Discografía*; Martín Sorrondeguy, 2015, *Maximum Rocknroll*, discogs.com/Los-Crudos-Doble-LP-Discograf%C3%ADa/release/7047745. JPEG image.



Fig. 17. Los Crudos: *Illegal y qué?*; Martín Sorrondeguy, nuclearwasteunderground.com/los-crudos-ilegal-y-que-backpatch-17x11/. JPEG image.

Performative Interventions and Transformations in Punk Photography

In addition to his work as a musician, documentarian, and graphic artist, Martín Crudo has published three collections of his photography, including *Porquería* (2011), *Get Shot* (2012), and *En busca de algo más* (2015). Over the past three decades, he has been working to capture punks throughout the world during, before, and after live shows, and in their daily lives. Through photography, Martín reconceptualizes the notion of the

“stage” in queer Latinx punk spaces throughout the hemisphere, breaking down restrictive and oppressive social conventions surrounding race, gender, sexuality, accessibility, and communication, both inside and outside the world of punk through performed embodied practice. His images highlight the transformative and resistant potential of queer Latinx punk performances to restage and reimagine possibilities of social change.

Mainstream live concert photography features larger than life images of musical performers surrounded by impressive lighting, smoke machines, the audience one big mass of admiring fans, hands (and phones) in the air in celebratory affective displays. Martín’s work, however, in some ways typical of the genre of punk and hardcore photography, instead depicts the makeshift venues and the blurring of performer and participant that characterize the subculture in all of its gritty pandemonium. The monochromatic black and white images highlight the raw materiality of structural, appareled, and corporal surfaces with intense detail. The continuation of his gritty black and white punk aesthetic serves to complicate the “white riot” narrative of punk to include representation of diverse ethnicities, races, genders, and sexualities and bring punk off the traditional stage and into different spaces and temporalities that offer nonnormative conceptions of history and culture to incorporate alternative practices of knowledge production.

The musical and subcultural performances represented in Martín’s photos privilege the centrality of embodied practices and attitudes, depicting bodies as interventions into cisheteronormative, white supremacist, and neoliberal capitalist categories and notions of space and time to transmit knowledge and subcultural

belonging. Martín documents underground punk shows that take place in DIY spaces, such as basements, houses, and other improvised venues in urban centers throughout the world, interrupting the flows of capital and consumption in mainstream culture industries. Many photos challenge the dominant “white riot” narrative of punk that categorize the genre as a straight, white, male, suburban, middle-class, youth phenomenon in their inclusion of diverse and nonnormative expressions of gender, racial, and sexual identity in performers and participants. This line is difficult to draw, however, since the performers’ stage often shares the same space with the participants, many times on the same level. Other times the interactions between performers and spectators further blur this division as they share the stage and microphone, crowdsurfing from the floor to the stage and stagediving from the stage to the floor over animated bodies that bear their weight, instability, and impact. In this way, rather than the conventional band playing to an audience, these photos depict punk performances as constituted by the participants as much as the band, attempting to contest the hierarchical band-audience relationship.

Several of Martín’s photos in *Get Shot* feature the Latinx female-fronted grunge punk band Weird TV of Olympia, Washington, performing live (see fig. 18 and fig. 19). “Weird TV,” depicts a live show in a dark venue lit by stringed lights hanging from the exposed beams of a low ceiling, just out of reach of fans’ swinging fists (see fig. 18). The bassist and the drummer are situated in the foreground on the left and right sides of the image, respectively. Their bodies face each other in active stances in mid-song. The neck of the bass guitar points toward the center of the image from the left side and the drumsticks from the right to form diagonal lines that meet at the vocalist in the center. The singer is gripping the microphone with her bleached hair suspended in midair as if

the sheer energy from the fan to her left gives her whiplash. She is in the background, on the edge of the crowd; she only comes into focus when the eye starts to follow the movement generated by the composition. The bassist, drummer, and vocalist form a triangle that leads the eye in a repetitive circular motion around the image. This evokes a sense of perpetual movement, allowing the viewer to participate in the performance from a different time and space. The crowd surrounds the band as they sing along, their bodies thrashing around, fists in the air, visibly demonstrating intense affective displays through facial and corporal expressions of passion and enthusiasm that go beyond language; demonstrating what critic Diana Taylor proposes in her book, *Performance* (2012), “affect in movement” (127). Taylor emphasizes the difficulty of containing bodies, as opposed to discourse, as being central to the body’s role in the potential of performance to provoke transformation and political intervention. The sharing of the stage between the band and the fans evokes a sense of community and creates a space of belonging where bodies can restage and reimagine social rules, conventions, and demands, challenging the hierarchical power relationships conventionally maintained during live musical performances. The trace left by the striking dynamism of this intimate moment suggests the latent energy that communicates the potentiality in queer minoritarian punk performances.



Fig. 18. “Weird TV” by Martín Sorrondeguy; *Martín Sorrondeguy*, martinsorrondeguy.com/at-the-show?lightbox=imagen19m. JPEG file.



Fig. 19. “Weird TV – Thrillhouse Records, San Francisco” by Martín Sorrondeguy (*Get Shot 15*).

The following images also evoke possibilities of transformation through performance and collaborative meaning-making between performers and audience. A sequence of two photos in *Get Shot* of the Buenos Aires-based band Boom Boom Kid performing in California titled “Boom Boom Kid – The Knockout, San Francisco” offers us a visual depiction of the affective and transformative potential of Latinx punk performances (see fig. 20). In the first photo of the series, the singer is suspended in mid-jump on a low stage in a dark venue lit by fluorescent lights that line the ceiling framing the stage. He is in a precarious position with his head turned away from the crowd and his knees bent. Propelled by his movement, the bleached ends of his dreadlocks hover in an almost extraordinary fashion. His left hand grasps the chord while his right holds the microphone steady as if it were cursed and difficult to control. He seems to be avoiding eye contact with the powerful vocal transmitter. Bold white lines shoot out of the microphone and into the crowd that stands a few feet from the stage. Numerous other white diagonal lines emanate from various sources, converging and deflecting around the image: blurred lights above the stage, the vocalist’s hair, the microphone wire, and tape on the stage. This creates a frenetic sense of movement that constantly moves the eye around the frame, evoking a feeling of frenzy in the viewer that speaks to queer Latinx punk performance’s ability to stimulate change between performer and participant as the electrified energy represented by the dynamic lines seemingly mobilizes the singer.



Fig. 20. "Boom Boom Kid – The Knockout, San Francisco" by Martín Sorrondeguy
(*Get Shot* 159-160).

The second image of the sequence can be read as the intensification of the transformative experience that takes place on the stage during this performance. In this photo, the vocalist and the drummer take up most of the composition, with only a few body parts from the crowd floating on the right side. The singer is centered in the foreground, his body and airborne hair extending the full vertical length of the image, the tips of his dreadlocks exceeding the limits of the frame. Here Martín makes more exaggerated use of photographic effects such as blur, long and multiple exposure that give the image an almost supernatural tone. Sitting behind his drum set to the left further back on the stage, the drummer and his kit appear to be undulating as a result of his multiple heads, one rising out of the other, three arms, each holding its own drumstick, and the illusion of an oversized kit with several snares, bass drums, and cymbals. There is a large lens flare that comes from the upper right side of the image that is organized by the rule of thirds. The opaque white center of the burst covers the fans' faces, and the emanating diagonal lines and curved outer lines of the flare project towards the vocalist. The white lines of the dreadlocks and of the refracting light that in the former photo created a sense of chaos are now more directed and purposeful, producing a cathartic and almost transcendental representation of the live energy of the performance. The placement of the flare suggests that the crowd is the source of transformative power, and the viewer takes part in the experience through the "seeing double" that results from the repetition of blurred forms and the dynamic movement created by the diagonal lines that burst out from the audience. This scene can be read as an anticipatory illumination of the potentiality of Latinx punk performance, as described by Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia*, which could provide a glimpse of alternative ways of being and living that resist

restrictive heteronormative narratives by complicating linear narratives of time and locating in the present the queer relationality of the past and its promise of a utopian future. Muñoz writes, “The anticipatory illumination of certain objects is a kind of potentiality that is open, indeterminate, like the affective contours of hope itself” (7). He locates this understanding of the utopian in the quotidian, “[t]he utopian function . . . enacted by a certain surplus in the work that promises a futurity, something that is not quite here” (7). These images of Boom Boom Kid demonstrate an ambiguous potentiality in their representation of a transnational dialogue between a South American band and a group of fans in the California Bay Area, suggesting punk’s potential in forging a cross-cultural hemispheric critical consciousness based on the transformative power of punk performance.

“Punks is Homos, San Francisco,” features a group of queer punks on the street with their backs to the camera, conceivably waiting outside a venue for a show to start (see fig. 21). In the foreground, one subject stands behind the others in the center wearing a leather motorcycle jacket with the words “PUNX IS HOMOS” spelled out in studs, dreadlocks in a messy ponytail, and sagging pants held up with a worn studded belt. Further back in the photo, a group of queer punks embrace each other in a semi-circle, each with their own individual backpatch hand-sewn on their vests and jackets. All seven figures look to the left, depicting a collective embrace of progressive politics. One backpatch design says “INSURRECTION, NOT REFORM: QUEER NEGATIVITY,” with astrological symbols and a snake-haired figure with a gender fluid body and punk style practicing witchcraft. Another features a headshot of the Mexican-American Tejano singer Selena with her name below it. The Selena backpatch invokes the past represented

by the late Mexican-American singer Selena Quintanilla tragically murdered by friend and former business associate Yolanda Saldívar. As a female Tejano singer, Selena represents a challenge to the male-dominated musical genre, as well as a representation of a Latinx artist challenging the dominant narratives of American pop music, breaking records and entering mainstream pop culture and institutions such as the Grammy Awards in the 1990s. Despite her widespread recognition as the Queen of Tejano music, Selena, like many Latinxs born in the US, did not speak Spanish fluently and had to learn the language phonetically to record. Selena also rejected the oppressive virgin-whore dichotomy by maintaining that she could be both a role model for young girls and a sex symbol, despite opposition from her critics. Her performed sexuality read as “hyper-Latina” by media critics also can also be linked to musical spaces in which gay men and women of color explored gender and sexual liberation and subverted norms (Vargas 117-126). By conjuring the past through Selena in a queer Latinx punk context, the backpatch in the photo re-contextualizes her representation in the present to critique current narratives that dictate norms surrounding identitarian constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. The anticipatory affective structures portrayed in the image through the group’s embracing while waiting and looking longingly to the left as well as the reference to Selena demonstrate Muñoz’s argument in *Cruising Utopia* that “queerness [is] a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity,” a desire and a longing that points to the future, a utopia that exists in the quotidian (16). In this way, this photo can be read as promoting utopian imaginings of a future time and place that is not yet here.



Fig. 21. “Punks is Homos, San Francisco” by Martín Sorrondeguy (*En busca de algo más* 103).

Several photos that best exemplify the potentiality of resistance, transformation, and social change through punk performances in Martín’s work represent direct political engagement. The first photograph, “Patricia Resistencia Fanzine - Buenos Aires, Argentina” features a woman standing in an open Juliet balcony several stories high on an urban street in the Argentine capital (see fig. 22). The figure takes up the left third of the image and holds up her zine to the camera to cover the bottom half of her face and most of her torso. Her identity is hidden behind the zine; she is dressed in all black with dark fingerless gloves, and her black curly hair covers most of her face above the zine, leaving only one eye visible, staring directly at the viewer. She holds the pages of the zine open, and they read, “Guitarras asesinas para la revolución” and “Resistencia, Te advierto: La naturaleza de la opresión es la estética de mi anarkía.”



Fig. 22. “Patricia Resistencia Fanzine – Buenos Aires, Argentina” by Martín Sorrondeguy, (*Get Shot* 229).

The photo above is one of several which demonstrate punk’s potential in communicating political ideas transnationally beyond the live show through the medium of the fanzine. Another image titled, “D.N.C. March – Chicago” features four young punks at the Democratic Party’s political event (see fig. 23). Three of them cover their faces with bandanas, evoking protest practices by the Zapatistas and the Antifa movement. Dressed in their full punk garb, they bring punk’s resistant ideas and gestures to the space of political protest.



Fig. 23. “D.N.C. March – Chicago” by Martín Sorrondeguy (*Get Shot* 217).

A notable image appears on the cover of *Get Shot*, titled “Punks in San Luís Potosi, Mexico,” and depicts two young punks hanging out (see fig. 24). Martín often photographs punks in other countries, but this image is particularly striking because of the tranquility of the punks’ positioning in the foreground as they stare down along the stucco covered walls of what appears to be an abandoned hacienda at a group of people far in the background at the end of a hall. The mohawked punk to the right is the closer of the two to the camera, sitting with his knees bent and his head resting on his hand, gazing towards the background. The punk to the lower left is sitting with his arms draped over his bent knees. Their gazes look at the hacienda, thus traveling to the violent past of colonialism and forced indigenous labor implied by the encomienda system in Latin America. Yet their body language, quiet and pensive, suggests they are simultaneously

contemplating, even looking ahead. In this photo, punk in Latin America depicts a means through which to access a queer utopia that offers alternative potentialities to prescriptive notions dictated by oppressive discourses throughout the Américas. Thus, I read the ambiguous excess of the punks' glance backward in this photograph as representative of a queer futurity which enacts a future vision of utopian hope.



Fig. 24. “Punks in San Luis Potosi, Mexico” by Martín Sorrondeguy (*Get Shot* 73).

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have explored the diverse multimedia work of queer Latinx punk icon Martín “Crudo” Sorrondeguy to show how it contributes to broadening our understanding of punk rock and Latinx cultures. Martín’s central role in forming Latinx and queercore bands Los Crudos and Limp Wrist, his archival work through documentary film in *Beyond the Screams/Más Allá de los Gritos*, his provocative graphic art, and his exploration of the transformative potential and building of critical consciousness in

transnational punk performances through photography demonstrate his unique perspective to shed light on punk throughout the Américas and broader hemispheric practices of resistance.

Also important to note are his collaborative endeavors with other queer Latinx artists explored in this project. In 2014, Martín teamed up with Alice Bag as his alter ego “Garlika Stanx” in the band The Shhh. They worked with the queer Latinx punk artists in LA-based Maricón Collective who brought in volunteers to play all the necessary production roles on a music video for their synth-pop song “Take,” which visually narrates the story of a young queer Latinx and their journey to self-empowerment. The video opens with a scene of the protagonist “Fab Queen’s” brother finding women’s clothes and fashion magazines in their room and subsequently kicking them out of the house. Fab goes to the Sunset Boulevard LA vintage shop and event space The Dog Show where they attempt to steal more women’s clothing items, but when caught by shop workers Alice Bag and Garlika Stanx, they punish Fab with a drag makeover. As the video comes to a close, they say goodbye to Fab, who then struts down the street with newfound confidence. Two members of Maricón Collective, in their signature shirts bearing the word “Maricón,” also make an appearance. The video premier was celebrated at 356 Mission, a community art space in LA, and Japanese-Mexican-American artist Shizu Saldamando made one of her prison art-inspired silkscreened “hanky panky” or “pañó” pieces with Alice Bag and Martín Crudo’s portrait to commemorate the night. Maricón Collective also unveiled their first zine for the event and played a DJ set in addition to sets by Alice Bag and Martín Crudo. Collaborations such as this one or the Desafinados event previously described in which Alice Bag, Michelle Cruz Gonzáles and

Cristy C. Road participated in book readings and queer art events, demonstrate the unique ways in which queer Latinx punk artists such as Martín are bridging communities and building innovative spaces around the country to promote the sharing of ideas, empowerment, creativity, and strategies of resistance. As part of his prolific work as an artist and a cultural worker, Martín continues to show up at underground punk shows around the world, on and off the stage, complicating narratives of the present in search of a queer futurity that will offer hope through dialogue, creativity, and critical thinking, still *“en busca de algo más.”*

Chapter III: Michelle “Todd” Cruz Gonzáles

I didn't usually get nervous before playing live, but I was nervous the night we played in front of members of Bikini Kill and Nation of Ulysses. I felt intimidated. Then a tall guy came up to me before we played to ask if we required the men in the crowd to stand in the back of the room, like they were told to do during a Bikini Kill set. I couldn't believe my ears, but now I had somewhere to direct my angst. At my drum set, I put my vocal mic up to my mouth, “Before we play, we'd just like to say that we don't expect men to stand in the back of the room. We're not a riot grrrl band.” All the air sucked right out of the room as soon as I said it. Mouths dropped open and silent. It was as if someone had turned off the sound.

Excerpt from *The Spitboy Rule* (2016) by Michelle Cruz Gonzáles, pp. 8-9.

Introduction: “We're Not a Riot Grrrl Band”

There is tension in the air when Spitboy arrives at the Washington, DC, venue to play “on riot grrrl territory,” DC being the mid-Atlantic capital of punk feminism during the 1990s with close ties to its original hub, Olympia, Washington (Cruz Gonzáles, *The Spitboy Rule* 7). While they are not scheduled to play with any riot grrrl bands that day, members of the movement's founding and associated bands Bikini Kill and Nation of Ulysses have already arrived to the show to support Spitboy. In the parking lot of the venue, the Spitwomen are greeted by a friend of a friend, Huggy Bear Boy, who offers them hugs. While her bandmates accept, Todd Spitboy, the punk name of drummer Michelle Cruz Gonzáles, refuses. She writes, “In the van, I felt like I had to explain myself, as if the band's motto ‘my body is mine’ didn't extend to contact with fans” (8). Already feeling like her boundaries have been crossed, she is on edge. A male crowd member asks if the band obliges the men at their shows to stand in the back of the room as per the rules of riot grrrl bands such as Bikini Kill, and Todd releases her anger from her drum microphone and drops the bomb, “We're not a riot grrrl band” (8). Lead singer

Adrienne tries to soften the blow, clarifying, “Please don’t block a woman’s view; don’t stand in front of someone who is shorter than you are. Just use common sense,” but the impact had already been felt. In shock, the crowd falls silent (9). Cruz Gonzáles narrates:

Being the hot-headed one, I had nominated myself to say something about what we had realized had become an elephant in the room, but I had chosen my words poorly, spoke too soon, shat where I ate. I had blasphemed in the sacred church of riot grrrl, broken the trance. But there it was, out in the open: we were a female punk band in 1992, but we were not a riot grrrl band. It was probably best for the rest of the band that I had been the one to say it, as I was the one who would become the most hated Spitwoman of just about every riot grrrl thereafter, because I was the scrappy one, the only one who didn’t grow up middle-class, the only nonwhite one; I had grown thicker skin and a chip on my shoulder. (9)

Having already discussed the issue amongst them, her bandmates back her stance on not sending boys to the back. In spite of this, however, Todd takes the blow, knowing that as a Xicana that grew up in poverty, she is not represented by the movement and must find or create an alternative path to empowerment.

Cruz Gonzáles frames the band’s rejection of the riot grrrl label in practical and ideological terms. She explains, “But we weren’t trying to piss on riot grrrl. It would have been easier to say we were a riot grrrl band because we stood for most of the same things, except there were three important distinctions: we had formed Spitboy in the Bay Area during the early days of their movement, we didn’t endorse separatism, and we didn’t want to be called girls” (*The Spitboy Rule* 10). Since riot grrrl bands were typically from the Pacific Northwest or Washington, DC, logically Spitboy does not identify as part of

the movement based on geography. Moreover, while they want fans to be respectful and for women to feel safe at their shows, as Adrienne clarifies after Todd's anti-riot grrrl declaration, they don't believe that separatism is the answer. The politics of exclusion and its related mode of identity politics ignore intersectional experiences, perhaps explaining why Todd reacts more strongly than the rest of the band. Her class, race, and ethnic identities challenge the homogeneity of the riot grrrl movement. Additionally, Spitboy's rejection of the category of "girls," as referring to young females with connotations of immaturity, innocence, and submissiveness, despite the more threatening growl intended with *grrrl*, draws attention to the infantilization and lack of sexual agency implied in calling grown women "girls."

This memorable encounter of Spitboy's confrontation with riot grrrl politics is narrated in Michelle Cruz Gonzáles's memoir, *The Spitboy Rule: Tales of a Xicana in a Female Punk Band* (2016). It sets the stage for this chapter's discussion of Cruz Gonzáles's work as a challenge to exclusionary white, middle-class feminist punk as well as the wider "white riot" representation of punk, and of her intersectional and transnational interventions into punk feminisms through memoir and music. Like the others in this project, this chapter considers the multimedia cultural production of the punk subculture in the context of queer Latinx punk by focusing on Michelle Cruz Gonzáles, whose work is in direct dialogue with the preceding artists, Alice Bag and Martín Crudo. The first section will feature an analysis of her zine-turned-memoir *The Spitboy Rule*, in which I focus on her use of self-fashioning, the negotiation of conflicting multiple subject positions, DIY and collaborative practices, and her confrontation with oppressive discourses both inside and outside of punk. The second section will cover her

musical contributions as the drummer and lyricist of 1990s hardcore punk band Spitboy, which rejected oppressive and limited discourses and propagated the true punk ideology of questioning everything. Through lyrical analysis, I will highlight important feminist themes such as gendered fear and violence, critiques of male privilege, and collective trauma. By reading these works together in the context of queer Latinx punk rock, this chapter highlights important contributions to the building of a critical consciousness through a reconceptualization of feminist punk through an intersectional and transnational lens, which remains relevant for punk artists and activists to come.

Michelle “Todd” Cruz Gonzáles and 1990s Punk Feminisms

A Xicanx writer, punk musician, educator, and blogger, Cruz Gonzáles was born in East LA and raised in the small Gold Rush town of Tuolumne, California. She played drums and wrote lyrics in three punk bands in the 1980s and 1990s, including Bitch Fight, Spitboy, and Instant Girl, aggressively criticizing patriarchy and gender roles through lyrics, sound, and performance. The influential 1990s all-female hardcore band Spitboy, which she founded, blazed trails for women musicians in the California Bay Area and beyond. Her memoir/punk rock herstory *The Spitboy Rule*, an expansion of an earlier zine of the same name she self-published, presents a first-hand account of the second wave of Bay Area punk from the sidelines of the feminist punk riot grrrl movement in the 1990s. In her memoir, Cruz Gonzáles describes her experiences as a Xicanx and the only person of color in Spitboy, including both collective and individual struggles such as misogyny, sexism, abusive fans, class, color blindness, and all-out racism. She continues to document her critical commentaries in her blog titled *Pretty*

Bold for a Mexican Girl: Growing Up Chicana in a Hick Town, which addresses a range of topics, from issues of punk rock, feminism, race and identity, and current political topics such as immigration and so-called “alternative facts,” to the writing process, crafting, and motherhood. Cruz Gonzáles represents an important figure in this project’s exploration of queer Latinx punk in her work as the drummer and lyricist in Spitboy, as well as in her later writings because her life and career shed light on her intersectional contributions to alternative feminisms and punk. Her voice and narrative represent important discourses that both dialogue with and challenge mainstream feminist punk ideologies. She asserts herself as a positive, innovative contributor rather than a representative of the trope that paints women of color as interventions or interruptions into hegemonic punk narratives, only serving to destroy or disintegrate the idealistic utopianism of (white) punk.

Spitboy was founded by Michelle Cruz Gonzáles in 1990 with vocalist Adrienne Droogas, guitarist Karin Gembus, and bassist Paula Hibbs-Rines, who was later replaced by Dominique Davison. The band toured extensively in the US and internationally including Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. They also released numerous albums on prominent punk rock labels such as Lookout Records, including a split LP with Chicago Latinx hardcore punk band Los Crudos. Martín “Crudo” Sorrondeguy praises the powerful on-stage confrontational tactics of the 1990s feminist hardcore band in his preface to *The Spitboy Rule*:

One of their records was titled *Mi Cuerpo Es Mío*, and don’t for a second think it is yours, motherfucker. Spitboy let you know it was not. Stopping a song mid-set to pull some smartass, drunken chump onto the stage so he can be public about

what Spitboy got under his skin—these women were smart . . . Spitboy just handed you the fucking mic, now what do you have to say? (xxi)

An all-female band known for being outspoken about their explicit feminist message, Spitboy approached hardcore punk as an avenue to explore and communicate their political ideas and concerns. In an interview with Cruz Gonzáles in the 2017 documentary *Turn it Around: The Story of East Bay Punk*, which chronicles San Francisco punk rock scenes from the late 1970s to the 1990s, she describes her motivation for founding Spitboy: “What I thought is, I want to start the kind of band that I want to hear, that I am not hearing out there. I want to start a female hardcore punk rock band that sings about political issues, in particular, to women” (02:38:24-02:38:36).

In an era widely remembered for the riot grrrl movement, Spitboy represents an important counternarrative to that scene’s exclusionary white, middle-class feminist ideals. The name of the unincorporated network of radical punk feminists as well as a zine compiled by Molly Neuman and Allison Wolfe of band Bratmobile, riot grrrl was born in Olympia, Washington, in 1991. Armed with the slogan “Revolution Girl Style Now,” the title of Bikini Kill’s 1991 demo, Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill brought the grrrls together to hold female-only meetings, out of which they formed bands, cut-and-pasted Xeroxed zines, and supported women in punk rock music. In her book named after the movement’s ideology, *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (2010), Sara Marcus emphasizes the impact of riot grrrl on the 1990s punk subculture and greater American society, especially the impact of empowering women.²⁷ In addition to

²⁷ In her preface to *Girls to the Front*, Marcus discloses her positionality as having attended riot grrrl meetings in Washington, DC, as well as reading many of the movement’s zines. While in many ways her book is a comprehensive account of riot grrrl, it is at times idealistic, emphasizing its ability to empower women more than the problematic divisions and limitations within the movement.

the DIY infrastructure of their art and musical practices, Marcus also describes how riot grrrls participated in direct political action and performative feminist art/activist practices, writing slogans and slurs in black markers and lipstick on their bodies and encouraging girls to go to the front of the crowd to provide safety and avoid the violent male-dominated mosh pits that characterized shows during the early 1990s.

While the riot grrrl movement was revolutionary in many ways, elevating women in the punk subculture and changing discourses surrounding gender and sexuality in the scene, it has also received criticism for its separatism, exclusivity, and homogeneity, consisting predominantly of white, middle-class, cisgender women. As a working-class woman of color, Cruz Gonzáles takes Spitboy's denunciation of sexist oppression and violence even further to reflect critically on conflicting discourses within punk feminisms that go beyond Spitboy's ideological critiques of riot grrrl in her memoir, deviating from the tendency to posit binary divisions between mainstream "white riot" punk and POC narratives that serve as interruptions or interventions into a teleological narrative of punk.

In her article "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival," critic Mimi Thi Nguyen explores the processes of remembering past feminisms and producing feminist futures exemplified in many texts of the mainstream punk canon, such as *Girls to the Front*. She argues against defining punk feminisms through the lens of riot grrrl which results in the erasure of other punk feminisms in the movement's desire to absolve riot grrrl, and punk in general, of its racialized past and present. Nguyen writes of the erasure of other punk feminisms, "Women of color are often called upon to respond to, and to otherwise enhance, privileged feminisms rather than recall what they themselves built" (188).

Alice Bag counters this tendency in building a platform to spread awareness of the role of Latinxs in founding the first wave of LA punk in the 1970s, and she shares her perspective on punk feminism in her article, “Work that Hoe: Tilling the Soil of Punk Feminism” (2012). As described in Chapter I, Alice Bag witnessed first-hand many of the seismic sociocultural shifts experienced in the US during and after the widespread social movements of the 1960s. In mapping her conception of punk feminism, she emphasizes the importance of these movements including the Chicano Movement, feminism, and gay rights, as well as her personal experiences of having Mexican immigrant parents, enduring the injustices of English-only practices in school, and growing up with an abusive father. Upon discovering the word feminism while watching the notorious “Battle of the Sexes” tennis match between women’s rights activist Billie Jean king and male chauvinist Bobby Riggs, Alice Bag immediately claimed the title as her own. She writes:

In the early 1970s, . . . I hadn’t identified myself as bisexual at that time, but witnessing the discrimination my friends had to deal with made me sympathetic to the struggle for gay rights and queer identification. Like Latinos and women, this group was seen as “other.” By the middle of the 1970s many of those individuals who had been identified as “different” or “other” were floating around in a vacuum, awaiting the spark that would ignite the next Big Bang. That spark was punk rock. (235-236)

By establishing connections among the struggles of diverse and overlapping marginalized groups, Alice Bag enacts an intersectional feminism drawn to punk rock as a means of resistance in its “rejection of the status quo as [much as a] product of the rejects of the

status quo” (236). By narrating her own story and emphasizing Spitboy’s ideological opposition to the politics and discourses surrounding riot grrrl, Cruz Gonzáles asserts her own minoritarian subjectivity and the importance of her contributions to hardcore punk beyond mainstream narratives in the 1990s to propose her own understanding of punk feminism.

The Spitboy Rule: A Punk Tour Diary

Michelle Cruz Gonzáles published her memoir *The Spitboy Rule* in 2016. It chronicles her experiences as the drummer of 1990s hardcore punk band Spitboy, two decades after the band broke up. This work is an extension of her 2014 self-published zine titled *The Spitboy Rule: Tales of a Female Punk Band* in which Cruz Gonzáles presents several of the anecdotes in the same informal prose that appear in the book-length work. Like Alice Bag’s *Violence Girl*, *The Spitboy Rule* is an important work in my discussion of the genre of life-writing because it is an introspective reflection on a specific artist’s experiences. Cruz González recounts playing drums and writing lyrics in a touring feminist hardcore punk band in order to explore punk’s role in shaping her subjectivity and developing her radical feminist and political consciousness. While *Violence Girl* focused on the late 1970s and early 1980s during the first wave of punk in LA, *The Spitboy Rule* describes what is commonly referred to as the 2nd wave of punk in the 1990s in the California Bay Area and elsewhere during the heyday of iconic bands such as Fugazi and Green Day, the riot grrrl movement, and the tragic suicide of Nirvana’s Kurt Cobain. In her memoir, Cruz Gonzáles, better known in those days by her punk name Todd, describes how she dealt with the sexism, classism, and colorblindness

that characterized the scene and the national political backdrop through a series of short vignettes organized nonchronologically and which narrate Todd's musical beginnings, Spitboy's band tenure, and their numerous tours throughout the world. Through its critical analysis of punk's relationship to race, gender, and class, the band's negotiation of stereotypes, conventions, and discourses both inside and outside the punk scene, collaborative and DIY practices, strategies of confrontation, and transcendent experiences, *The Spitboy Rule* is an important contribution to this project's goal of building an understanding of strategies of resistance within queer Latinx punk communities.

A Creation Story: Punk Self-Fashioning and (In)visibility

The prologue of *The Spitboy Rule* titled "A Band Is Not an Identity" introduces the protagonist and briefly describes her childhood in the context of her growing interest in music and her desire to play in an all-female punk band. The memoir opens when a young Cruz Gonzáles hears the band The Go-Go's for the first time, an experience that changes her life. Already involved in music as a flute player in the school band, the young protagonist knows this is her calling: to be in an all-female rock band like The Go-Go's. Her gender identity is inseparable from her musicianship from the start. She chooses the flute because it "was pretty and it seemed like a good choice of instrument for a girl" (2). While she describes being influenced by female musicians such as Joni Mitchell and Linda Ronstadt (before her Mexican- American heritage was widely known), she realizes that the The Go-Go's are different. As women participating in the male-dominated genre of rock music, The Go-Go's and the notion of an all-female band

represent defiance and independence to the young protagonist; the safety of the women's space reflects her experiences being raised by strong and creative women.

Cruz Gonzáles describes moving from East LA as a child to a small town in Tuolumne County, outside the Bay Area. She and her two siblings are raised by a single, drug-addicted mother on welfare. Unable to pass as white like her mother, the "Xicana in a hick town," doesn't fit in anywhere. While The Go-Go's and other female artists stimulate in her a desire to make music in an all-women's space and contribute to her growing feminist consciousness, the anger and "sounds of rebellion" of punk rock and its appeal to misfits and outsiders across gender, racial, class, and religious boundaries awake the protagonist to the radical politics that she hears in The Clash. At a 1983 Clash performance at the US Festival, she feels as if Joe Strummer speaks directly to her from the stage when he passionately rants: "You make, you buy, you die. That's the motto of America. You get born to buy, and I'll tell you those people out in East LA they ain't going to stay there forever. If there's anything going to be in the future it's going to be all parts of everything. It's not going to be just one white way down the middle of the road" (sic; qtd. in Cruz Gonzáles, *The Spitboy Rule*: 3). She feels he is speaking directly to her as a Mexican-American born in East LA who brings her ethnicity to a small, mostly-white town of hippies and directs her awareness to how her minoritarian subjectivity interacts with her surroundings. She cuts her hair short, rebelling against the Mexican beauty standards enforced by her mother, and buys black eyeliner to do Chola makeup like her cousins who live in LA.

While her self-fashioning empowers her to embrace those aspects of her that her mother tries to conceal and that relate to other definitions of Mexican femininity, she also

wants to create something through which she can explore her developing radical feminist politics and her anger about being othered on multiple axes. Armed with some drumming tips and a new nickname from friend Kevin Bernido, Todd decides to teach herself to play drums. Together with her best friend Nicole Lopez and two other young women from Tuolumne, Todd starts her first punk band, Bitch Fight, and they move to San Francisco to join the thriving Bay Area punk scene. While impassioned to sing about issues that affect them as women, immaturity and petty disagreements prevent the band from effectively collaborating and navigating the women's space that they created. But for Todd, it's not only youthful inexperience that gets in the way. She learns that self-defining as unilaterally female ignores the real effects of racial, ethnic, and class discrimination both in punk and in dominant American society. She is not only an ethnic minority in her all-female band and the mostly white punk scene that reflects the climate of colorblindness in 1990s Anglo American society and politics; she also realizes the impact of her class background on her experiences in punk. She writes that, "It also gave me a unique perspective, a perspective that I tried to ignore for a long time, but it never let me forget it was there, gnawing at me, reminding me that being in an all-female hardcore punk band wasn't the only way to define myself" (Cruz Gonzáles, *The Spitboy Rule* 5).

The prologue of *The Spitboy Rule* notably situates the autobiographical narrative in a sociopolitical and cultural context that differs from the one depicted in Alice Bag's *Violence Girl*. This change is reflected in the subtitle of Cruz Gonzáles's memoir, *Tales of a Xicana in a Female Punk Band*, which shifted from the original zine subtitle, *Tales of a Female Punk Band*. With this revision, Cruz Gonzáles inserts her ethnicity and

individual intersectional subjectivity into the experiences of Spitboy that she narrates in the memoir. This is markedly different from the burgeoning punk scene described in *Violence Girl*, which characterizes punk as a fluid and all-inclusive space for the socially marginalized in which women, queers, and people of color all coexist under the overarching label of “punk” as a unifying marker of difference. Cruz Gonzáles’s depiction of the 1990s scene, however, reflects her awareness of the colorblindness of the era and how it translates into her invisibility, complicating such utopian imaginings of punk *as* difference and shifting towards a narrative of punk *and* difference to create space for alternative experiences amidst predominantly white, middle-class movements such as riot grrrl.

Spitboy forms following Bitch Fight’s break up and Todd’s flunking out of community college in San Francisco. Todd is on drums, Karin on guitar, Adrienne on vocals, and Paula on bass, with Dominique later replacing Paula. Although not included in the memoir, the band discussed their origin in an interview in the infamous punk zine *Maximum Rocknroll* in May of 1992. They were inspired by an indigenous legend out of the Pacific Northwest found in the novel *Daughters of Copper Woman* (1981) by Anne Cameron, especially the legend’s reversal of the man-centered Christian creation narrative of Adam and Eve and its celebration of female bodily fluids. As legend has it, a woman is stranded on an island and, feeling isolated and hopeless, she cries, her mucus and tears flowing into her hands. Glancing down, she is disgusted by her own fluids, but the gods speak to her and reassure her of the naturalness of her body. In return for her trust, a “spitboy” rises out of her fluids to be her companion so that she is no longer alone. Whereas in the book of Genesis, Adam is made from earth and Eve from his rib to

serve as his companion in life, the spitboy story presents the woman as preceding the existence of man, the latter being formed out of her bodily fluids to serve as her companion. This narrative reverses the power relations constructed in the Judeo-Christian story, whose hierarchy is reproduced in societies throughout the world, and it elevates female bodily fluids from their status as taboo and abject to the basis of all humankind.

In the interview, the band members shared the story and discussed their interpretations. Todd commented about “spitboy”:

I really like using the name and talking about it because people always ask us what it means. It shows other people and us that other cultures value those things and this culture does not. Our culture makes women feel ashamed or feel grossed out or think that their vaginas smell gross or that it’s really disgusting that we bleed once a month. And that’s terrible because these are natural processes that our body goes through to clean itself. It’s naturally and totally...what’s the word? [Karin: It’s life affirming.] Todd: It’s a totally necessary function that helps us to live. (“Interviews: Spitboy”)

Through the band name, the members of Spitboy question and criticize culturally specific, hegemonic gender norms and standards of femininity to reaffirm the sanctity and potentiality in the female body as it functions to support everyday life. In addition, the pubescent masculinity of the name “Spitboy” to refer to an all-female band is a queer gesture, reinforced by Cruz Gonzáles’s nickname Todd. The first part of the invented compound word makes mention of saliva in the state or action of being ejected from the mouth, often as a gesture of contempt. Together, the words make a statement in a queer

decolonializing gesture that belittles and chastises men as representative of the cisheteropatriarchy.

Although she never reveals the origin story in *The Spitboy Rule*, Cruz Gonzáles does mention the band's name's connection to the biblical narrative. The last chapter describes the forming of the band and is titled "Spitboy: The Creation Story." Cruz Gonzáles describes meeting Adrienne three years before they start Spitboy in the fall of 1987, and then having to retell the story upon re-meeting her through a mutual friend. Although Todd and fellow Bitch Fight member Suzy had approached Adrienne and her boyfriend, guitar player for Bay area punk band Christ on Parade, years before to rave over his band as fans and over the two of them for their punk status, Adrienne responds humbly. Todd has to convince her to be in the band. They meet at a borrowed practice space to explore their musical and collaborative compatibility. Seeing that she is the only one with experience playing in bands and writing music, Todd comes prepared with ideas for a song. Cruz Gonzáles describes the space of their first collective musical interaction with affectual intensity. She writes, "The borrowed practice space, which smelled of sweat, beer, and cigarettes, hummed with palpable excitement and chemistry. Adrienne charmed everyone with her amazing openness, Karin wowed us with her crunchy guitar sound and bright smile, Paula grounded us with her generous spirit, and I brought experience and knowhow" (128). The magical description of their initial musical encounter suggests their almost destined union as they end the trial practice unanimously as a band. After their second practice, they have their first song written, a song that represents for Todd everything she has searched for in a band, to hear and be. She ends the chapter and the book:

The song was tough, and vulnerable, and it had attitude. It sounded like something totally fresh and new, like the female punk band I had been waiting to hear, waiting to discover for some time, the band that I was not in with Karin, and Paula, and Adrienne, the band that would soon be named after a female-body-centric creation story, a story that didn't involve god, a rib, or a man. (128-9)

Framing this musical encounter and the start of Spitboy as a creation story, Cruz Gonzáles establishes the beginning of her world and her conscious existence as a radical feminist punk with a counter-hegemonic symbolic narrative. The Spitboy creation story supports queer interpretations of original conception, subverts gender norms established and reproduced through organized religion, and promotes alternative understandings of spirituality that reject repressive conventions surrounding heterosexist notions such as “original sin” and the resulting societal structures.

Collaboration and DIY Practices

Cruz Gonzáles describes in *The Spitboy Rule* how the band works collaboratively to write music, make logistical and creative band decisions, and carry out responsibilities including making DIY screen-printed band merchandise. Chapter 2 titled “Kill White Bitch” narrates the process of selecting cover art for their first seven-inch record. In their lyrics, the band addressed women's issues and spoke out about many of the inequality, injustices, and violence experienced by women on a day-to-day basis, including street harassment as demonstrated by the song “The Threat.” Vocalist Adrienne proposes for the cover art a photograph that she takes of a graffiti tag that she passes daily that declares “kill white bitch,” arguing that it demonstrates the everyday danger that women

experience. Todd wants to object but struggles with finding the words to express why, so she suggests that using that image would also be making a statement about its author. She writes, “I also wanted to say something about how the term ‘white bitch’ didn’t apply to me, but I didn’t quite know how to articulate this point, as I didn’t often make references to being Mexican, a Xicana, in a mostly white band in a mostly white scene. It was just easier to try to blend in with my short hair, my tattoo, and my punk uniform” (13). Her bandmate Paula seemingly understands Todd’s discomfort and declares that the photograph makes more of a statement about race than gender. This gives Todd much needed support for her to add, “And I’m not white, so it doesn’t really apply to all of us” (13). No one responds, but the group decides to use a blurry nude of Adrienne on the cover instead, emphasizing body positivity over gendered and racialized violence. While the group makes a thoughtful and consensual decision through collective discussion, the silence surrounding Todd’s experience as the only POC in the band reflects wider concerns of how implicit and subtle racism in avoidance discourse renders minority subjects invisible. Todd attempts to conform and assimilate to punk culture through punk aesthetics and self-fashioning but battles with her racial and ethnic discomfort in her inability to replace complex intersectional subjectivities with a single marker of difference such as “punk.”

Another collective band decision regarding an image that would later become Spitboy’s logo is the subject of Chapter 4, “Flower of Evil” (see fig. 25). Todd finds the image in the 1958 edition published by Peter Pauper Press of the poetry collection originally titled *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) by French poet Charles Baudelaire. This edition was illustrated with artist Jeff Hill’s woodcuts featuring female nudes. Cruz

González describes stumbling upon the image while casually reading Baudelaire's poetry and being stricken by how the works are, "intensely female, strong, and vulnerable too, like us" (*The Spitboy Rule* 22). The woodcut features the upper half of a nude woman turned very slightly to the side, her navel and one nipple exposed, long flowing black hair made up of solid bold forms, and her arm held up with her hand in a fist covering her face. The roughly carved lines give a jagged outline to her body. The original image has a red background and nipple; however, Todd sees its appeal in its translatability to black and white through the inevitable DIY punk distributive process of photocopying.



Fig. 25. Spitboy logo/Cover of *The Spitboy CD*; Spitboy, 1994, Allied Recordings, [discogs.com/Spitboy-The-Spitboy-CD/release/2831380](https://www.discogs.com/Spitboy-The-Spitboy-CD/release/2831380). JPEG image.

The visual elements of Hill's image and the use of the woodcut as a medium in the context of *The Spitboy Rule* connects to transnational Mexican Revolutionary and Chicana art traditions that resonate with the aesthetics and ideals of punk. The prolific Mexican tradition of printmaking was made internationally famous by José Guadalupe Posada's politically satirical *calaveras* but was also widely used throughout the Mexican

Revolution and other periods of unrest. Works such as the collection *Estampas de la Revolución Mexicana* (1947) published by the collective Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP) in Mexico City were used to commemorate revolutionaries, express social political critiques, and document the struggles of oppressed people using accessible and popular imagery. Chicana printmaking also has strong ties to a history of political activism in the 1960s civil rights movements and the celebration of ethnic pride. Printmaking was the primary medium of the posters, graphics, and cartoons that were used for community organizing and the dissemination of political messages, especially in California. A major promoter of the Chicana poster movement of the 1960s, Self-Help Graphics of LA, is a direct descendent of the TGP (C. Jackson).

Noteworthy in the image is the hand in a raised fist covering the female figure's face. The fist resembles the one most famously used by the Black Panther Party in the 1960s as a symbol of resistance and solidarity with the black power movement. Although there are many historical narratives tied to the raised or clenched fist as a radical political symbol, the TGP popularized a graphic image of it in 1948. The image is also reminiscent of the style and imagery of Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros, known for portraying strong revolutionary bodies and promoting proletarian struggles through angular corporal forms and prominently featuring hands in his works. Siqueiros also had ties to the TGP, using the workshop as the base from which he launched his attempted assassination of Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky (Oehy, Milena et al). When Todd in *The Spitboy Rule* interprets the gesture of the figure in the print as "female, strong, and vulnerable too," she establishes a link between the popular symbol of resistance and the exposed female body, in "anguish, but without shame" (Cruz Gonzáles 22). In

appropriating this image and interpreting it as such, Todd reclaims vulnerability from its negative connotation as a weak feminine characteristic and allows it to coexist with strength. Although Hill's image in *Flowers of Evil* does not necessarily have direct links to these artistic genealogies, the medium, visual elements, and style appeal not only to the broadly defined DIY ethics of the punk subculture, they also speak poignantly to the complex experiences of a Xicana in a female punk band such as Cruz Gonzáles.

The chapter ends with Spitboy's first show. The band includes the logo on lyric sheets that they hand out to audience members so that they can follow along. Printmaking in Mexico also has a long history of printing lyrics, specifically in *corridos* printed as broadside ballads that incorporated image, music, and text so that they could be understood by all socioeconomic classes. Posada himself illustrated the rhyming verses of *corridos* with his engravings, and the *corridistas* would sell affordable broadsides with the illustrated lyrics, making the practice collective, interactive, and accessible (Tyler 60). At the end of the chapter, Cruz Gonzáles describes the impact of watching the women in the crowd following and singing along to their songs, lyric sheets in hand, smiling in approval. She writes, "in the end, reaching them and seeing their approval was what mattered most" (*The Spitboy Rule* 24). Invoking the transnational Mexican and Chicanx traditions surrounding accessibility, collaboration, and audiovisual interaction through printmaking, the Spitboy lyrics sheets with their logo imprinted provide the band an important means through which to spread their message. The band later adopts the practice at every show, even translating their lyrics into Spanish, German, and Italian.

Punk Rock Cred and Controversy

Chapter 14 titled, “My Body Is Mine,” returns to the invisibility of people of color in punk in the 1990s through an ironic anecdote about cultural appropriation. Upon releasing their third seven-inch record titled “Mi Cuerpo Es Mio,” suggested by Todd, Spitboy is accused of cultural appropriation by a well-known (unnamed, white) riot grrrl from Olympia, Washington, the birthplace of the movement, for the use of Spanish in the title. Although Todd does not necessarily try to pass as white in the punk subculture, Cruz Gonzáles explains how many punks distance themselves from their ancestry due to experiences in dysfunctional families, choosing instead to find community in punk. In place of familial identification, playing music, making zines, and city of origin are more important in self-definition, as seen in punk nicknames that consist of the first name followed by the band name, such as Alice Bag, or Todd Spitboy, although this practice can simultaneously serve to further erase diverse ethnicities within punk.

The cultural appropriation accusation awakens Todd to the effects of having spent years trying to fit in in Tuolumne and now the punk scene. She narrates, “In conforming to the nonconformist punk ways, adhering, mostly, to the punk uniform, I had lost something along the way, and I began to experience rumblings of discontent that I didn’t quite understand” (Cruz Gonzáles, *The Spitboy Rule* 89). Being criticized by a prominent member of the feminist punk movement initially makes Todd angry, but she soon realizes that it is actually sadness that she feels, hurt by her invisibility and guilty and ashamed that she let it happen. She writes, “At shows, I did not register as Xicana. I was just the drummer of Spitboy, and for some reason I couldn’t be both” (90). Growing up in a small town and never having learned Spanish, Todd feels disconnected from the rest of her

family in East LA and from her heritage, so she begins taking Spanish classes at a local community college which, she remarks, “provided some relief and helped me to come out as a person of color in the punk scene” (89). Cruz Gonzáles’s use of the closet metaphor in reference to her race and ethnicity demonstrates the homogeneity and repressive nature of the punk subculture in the Bay Area in the 1990s in regard to navigating her Mexican heritage.

Race and ethnicity are not the only categories that complicate Todd’s identification with punk. In Chapter 3 titled “Punk Points,” Cruz Gonzáles narrates her experiences with the complex and contradictory unspoken rules surrounding punk rock credibility which relate to socioeconomic class background and education. She writes:

Of course, like Bitch Fight, none of Spitboy was originally from Berkeley, Oakland, or San Francisco, the cities where we lived, but I was the only member who grew up in a small town, who was raised by a single mom, and who had been raised in relative poverty. In Spitboy, I didn’t have to work hard to appear edgy and gritty at all. I had a lot of punk rock cred because I had been in two bands already, but in Spitboy I felt I had to work hard to appear smart, knowledgeable about the issues, not one in particular, but all of them, and not let it show that I was once someone who couldn’t understand TV news or had a drug-addicted mom. Born into relative comfort and white privilege Karin, Paul, and Adrienne’s identities might have been easier to navigate, but if they weren’t careful, they could lose punk points too. (*The Spitboy Rule* 19)

The unofficial rating system of punk rock cred leaves little room for advancement in the balancing act between race and class privilege and disadvantage.

The power of education, however, becomes accessible to Todd through her Tuolumne friend and fellow Bitch Fight member, Nicole Lopez, and her mother. Todd spends many nights watching the news with the Lopez women learning about US involvement in Central America and other international politics. Nicole's mother records summaries of the news reports on cassettes for them to listen to later. Like the women who raised her, Todd wants to be an expert in something, and impressed by Nicole and her mother's intelligence, she too gains an interest in international affairs. Todd struggles to understand the news reports, however, and questions her own intelligence due to her upbringing. Her desire to be smart and surpass the connotations implied in being from a small town also play into punk rock credibility that considers well-informed political consciousness worthy of many "punk points."

Furthermore, an awkward encounter between Todd's family and her band members reinforces the difficulties of making space within punk for minority subjects amidst the complex rules surrounding accessibility and authenticity. In Chapter 10, "Race, Class, and Spitboy," Todd brings her fellow Spitwomen to meet her grandmother while passing through East LA on the way back from playing at a festival in Long Beach. Born in the US to Mexican parents who migrated to the US during the Revolution, Grandma Delia is someone Cruz Gonzáles describes as a tough and loving bilingual, bicultural feminist. But upon entering her house, the reactions of her bandmates make her see her grandmother, her house, and all the comforting memories there through unfamiliar and patronizing eyes. They are unusually quiet, and the way their eyes scan the objects in the room and their anxious body language remind Todd of a previous uncomfortable discussion about her family with a band member. In this conversation,

Karin's reaction to finding out that Todd and her two siblings all have different fathers makes Todd defensive about her mother's past relationships. Todd assumes Karin will understand why her mother left her abusive father while pregnant because Spitboy had written a song about domestic violence, but her uncomfortable expression says otherwise, the same expression that reappears on her face that day at Grandma Delia's house. Even her grandmother senses the unease and tries to fill the silences with light conversation. Cruz Gonzáles reflects on the experience:

Stopping had not been a good idea at all. We should have stayed on I-5. I should not have suggested that we veer off into the second-largest Mexican city in the world. I had made everyone uncomfortable, and now I was outside of my body, seeing my adored Grandma and her shabby East LA home, which I had always found tidy and comforting, her knickknacks, which they probably called tchotchkes, and all her family photos of Mexicans, and now myself through different eyes, and I didn't like it one bit. (*The Spitboy Rule* 50)

In punk spaces, it is easier to ignore concrete differences between band members in favor of a unifying punk identity, but Todd is saddened by the other Spitwomen's reactions when confronted with their own discomfort in the face of race, class, and cultural difference. Still processing from deep within her closet, Cruz Gonzáles describes her emotional state as an "angry tumor that would grow and grow until I couldn't pretend it wasn't there anymore," a profound wound for which she must search for the tools to first give a name and then begin to heal (51).

Confronting Gender Roles, Sexism, and Misogyny

Because they belong to a self-proclaimed feminist hardcore band, the members of Spitboy take on the difficult task of confronting sexism head on within and beyond the punk scene through their lyrics, on-stage performances, and practices. “The Spitboy Rule” is the title of Chapter 11 and dictates how the band proposes to practice their autonomy as a touring band and maintain their collaborative and unified dynamic: “no boyfriends on tour” (Cruz Gonzáles *The Spitboy Rule* 52). At the time, Spitboy is one of the only all-female bands playing the male-dominated subgenre of stripped-down, aggressive hardcore punk, and they already get their fair share of sexist remarks at shows and on the road. On their first tour, it is just the four of them traveling halfway across the country in an old van. Cruz Gonzáles writes, “That may have been a mistake, but we wanted to prove that we could do it all: write our own songs, play our own instruments, drive the van, navigate the interstates with a paper map, unload our own equipment, and change our own tires (and in only a matter of minutes). Paula, our bass player, even fixed the van when it broke down” (52). A feat for any band, the rule (covering all men, not just boyfriends) is not sustainable as they gear up for a tour through Europe. They hire drivers, since none of them are licensed to drive overseas, a merch guy, and one of the most experienced roadies in the punk scene, who also happens to be Paula’s boyfriend. Breaking the rule does affect the band’s close-knit synergy, but always in the back of their minds, the Spitboy Rule helps the group maintain perspective on their collective vision and goals.

In Chapter 13, titled “Pete the Roadie,” Cruz Gonzáles discusses gendered forms of labor as she recounts her experiences with hired help on tour, specifically through her

relationship with punk rock's best professional roadie. Although roadies are not typically perceived as subordinate or menial in the punk scene, Todd is accustomed to anticipating the needs of others as a woman and the oldest daughter of a single mother, not vice versa. She initially feels reluctance and discomfort in being served on tour, usually a role reserved for the gendered labor of women. She does, however, admire the roadie's desire to support the music and artists he loves by using his own skills. She writes, "He did what he did without the glory of actually being in a band. I admired this code, being a woman whose life had, in large part, been about serving others, helping my mom take care of my brother and sister, and in my job as a preschool teacher . . . But when applied to me, it felt decadent. I didn't feel comfortable being served" (*The Spitboy Rule* 82). While Spitboy actively attempts to resist succumbing to dependent roles through the Spitboy rule and their independent practices, this contradictory stance reveals Todd's internalization of gendered divisions of labor that allocate women to inferior positions of the men they are to serve.

Another example of internalized sexism in *The Spitboy Rule* appears in Chapter 5 in the story about recording the band's first record. The title, "The Threat," is the name of a Spitboy song they record that day, and which Adrienne wrote about the dangers of walking alone at night as a woman. After a full day of recording instrumentals and Adrienne on lead vocals, Paula, Karin, and Todd sing their background vocals. The result is not what they expect, however. Cruz Gonzáles writes:

But when Kevin played it back for us to hear, watching for our reaction from behind the glass in the engineer's booth, the three of us looked frantically back and forth among one another. We had developed a hardcore sound that we liked,

the sound that we had wanted to hear women play, but we found ourselves faced with a terrible dilemma. We wanted to sound like women, but we didn't want to sound like *that*. (26)

Despite their awareness of negative stereotypes surrounding the pitch of women's voices, they are shocked at how "screechy" and "high-pitched" they sound and compare their vocals to Edith Bunker from the 1970s television show *All in the Family*. In tacit agreement, they re-record the gang vocals. Paradoxically, they lower their registers an octave to yell, "Threatening, threatening, threatening" as Adrienne screams fiercely about the fear she feels as a woman walking alone at night, yielding to their insecurities surrounding gendered stereotypes and their connotations while simultaneously spreading awareness of the effects of potential violence against women (27).

Cruz Gonzáles doesn't only describe the band's difficult struggles with internalized oppressions. *The Spitboy Rule* also narrates explicit and even violent moments of sexism inflicted upon the Spitwomen. Throughout the memoir, Todd navigates sexist stereotypes surrounding female musicians. In high school, immature chauvinist punk boys tell her that "Girls can't play music" (31). While in punk and rock music in general there are more men than women musicians and performers, female drummers are especially uncommon. Not only does Todd have to withstand the overused "dumb drummer" stereotype, she must endure frequent sexist backhanded compliments such as "You hit hard for a girl" (31).

The band as a whole must regularly navigate assumptions and disrespectful comments about their sexuality, their ideologies, and identities including being lesbians, vegan, crusty punks, mean and angry, or wild partiers, reflecting inferences based on

physical appearances and their music as well as tropes about angry feminists (Cruz Gonzáles, *The Spitboy Rule* 97-8). The Spitwomen are also repeatedly called “cunts” and “bitches,” in addition to more indirect comments such as, “you guys have really *improved*,” and emphases on “how much they loved *girl* bands” (emphasis added; 42, 40). As a band with an important message, the members take it upon themselves to talk between songs about the content of lyrics and their explanations. This is when the more direct comments such as the all too common “shut up and play” are hurled at the band (39). At a show on their first tour in Albuquerque, New Mexico, singer Adrienne stops the band mid-song to check on an audience member with a bloody nose. He reacts to her concern with surprising aggression, and when they resume playing the song, he sprays beer in her face. Violent moshing causes the show organizer to stop the music once again, and a voice from the back of the room yells, “Hey, if you want to prove your womanhood, shut up and spread your legs or play” (41).

While all the band members are shocked at the flagrant audacity and deliberately demeaning remark, Todd feels a surge of anger. Cruz Gonzáles narrates, “The whole band was stunned. We had heard a lot of rude comments, been objectified, and shined on. We tried using humor, we tried to heckle back, and we tried educating people. But this comment, which was meant to humiliate us, set off a wildfire inside me” (*The Spitboy Rule* 41). She throws her sticks and runs screaming into the crowd, cursing and thrashing her arms. This image of the angry feminist draws interesting connections with how Mimi Thi Nyugen relates Sara Ahmed’s figure of the “feminist killjoy” in *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) to the frequently employed “angry woman of color who refuses to *move on* from either institutional or epistemic violence, even *after* the tearful apologies

and soul-searching late nights” (191). Ahmed explains that the temporality of the violence that the “killjoy” names is still relevant in the present; however, in naming her as such, she is displaced into the past, becoming an untimely violence encroaching upon the present. Nguyen situates this point in her argument about intervention as a temporary factor into teleological narratives, a reframing of futuristic notions of how interventions by women of color feminists are solely incorporated as a brief disruption in feminist temporalities (191). Cruz Gonzáles, however, seeks to rewrite such narratives in an effort to critically engage the tensions surrounding punk feminisms in the 1990s. In this scene in the memoir, Paxston Quiggly, the band Spitboy is on tour with, is local to the area and the guitarist steps in to persuade Todd not to pursue the offender, warning her of his notoriety in the scene as dangerous. The show ends as the members of Paxston Quiggly construct a barrier between Spitboy and the crowd. All of the Spitwomen are drained and emotional. Many fans leave, but enough stay to express their concern and compassion, help load their instruments, and buy merchandise. Having had to deal with that group of frequent offenders for his six years, the show organizer tells the band they are the first to ever confront them for their harassment. Todd doesn’t want to ever have to revisit the anger she feels, and from then on, the members of Spitboy make a conscious effort to reevaluate how they handle sexist hecklers and other provocations from the crowd.

Through their onstage banter and lyric sheets, Spitboy promotes their collective values and ideologies such as encouraging the participation of women at their shows, but they also work to develop their onstage strategies of reaction and confrontation after the dramatic end to the show in New Mexico. For example, Cruz Gonzáles recounts when Karin gives literary advice to a male heckler who told them to “quit your bitching and

play some music,” and on tour in France, curses a man out for saying “Enlevez vos chemises!” in his native language (*The Spitboy Rule* 43, 55). In their discussions about possible approaches to common crowd responses, the Spitwomen create a supportive collective structure to always back each other up in agreeing to use their stage as an open forum for any band member to express their passionate views. There is always space for another member to share their perspective, but in the end, no voice is ever shut down.

“Coming Out” as a POC in Punk

During Spitboy’s six years as a band and tours through Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, Todd experiences varying degrees of homesickness, loneliness, and altogether alienation. In their travels, her bandmates are in awe of picturesque views in foreign cities and they fantasize about living there. Todd, however, struggles with cultural and racial estrangement in relation to being far from the largely Latinx populated Bay Area with Spanish street signs and city names, as well as to the homogeneity of the punk scene in general. She writes, “I’d stay quiet because I knew they wouldn’t want to hear my answer. I had recently realized that my feelings of alienation from the punk scene stemmed from my somewhat closeted ethnic identity, and I didn’t think they’d understand” (Cruz Gonzáles, *The Spitboy Rule* 105). Her insecurities surrounding her skin color, her ethnicity, and her masculine frame clash with the positive attention she gets on tour for being the drummer of Spitboy, so she makes her own rule about intimacy, vowing to avoid sexual encounters and even hugs with strangers while traveling out of principle. On their Pacific Rim tour, however, Todd breaks her rule. When she meets Sabrina, an Argentine woman living in Australia, an intimate night together helps her to

feel comfortable abroad for the first time, a sense of comfort based on the ethnic identity she and Sabrina share.

When Spitboy travels to Japan, none of her bandmates declare their desire to live there as they had done in places such as New Zealand and Australia. Oddly enough, however, this is the one place Todd feels comfortable. Todd is usually the last to be noticed in the band. Adrienne gets attention for her eccentric look, Karin for her great smile, and Dominique for her height. However, as the four of them get off the plane in Japan, a Japanese teenager shouts “Pocahontas! Pocahontas!” at a confused Todd who has her hair styled in pigtails anticipating the hot weather (Cruz Gonzáles, *The Spitboy Rule* 121). People stare, point, and whisper at her as they make their way through the Kansai airport. She quickly acclimates to Japan, unlike the others. She draws positive attention from strangers in stores and she finds many men attractive, in their skin that closely resembled hers. She feels proud that she is enjoying Japan more than her bandmates and “feeling less invisible” (123). Bringing punk out of the Anglo-dominated, Western spaces gives Todd the opportunity to finally fit in and reverse the alienation and invisibility that she experiences at home and on most tours.

Also pivotal in Todd’s journey to “come out” as a person of color in the punk scene is Spitboy’s relationship with Latinx hardcore punk band Los Crudos, which Cruz Gonzáles describes in the chapter titled “Viviendo Asperamente.” Although there had been other Latinx punk bands in California, mostly from the LA area, many of them opted not to acknowledge or claim their ethnic identity. Los Crudos not only identify as Latinx, they sing about issues that affect the Latinx community in Spanish. Vocalist Martín Sorrondeguy and Todd hit it off immediately, like long-lost relatives, and soon

after the two bands become close-knit friends. When Todd starts a relationship with Los Crudos guitarist José, she must confront her own internalized racism, having only ever dated straight, white males in bands. Spitboy and Los Crudos decide to put out a split record together in 1995, and they collectively agree to title the record in Spanish and feature a Latina woman on the cover. Cruz Gonzáles writes:

The title *Viviendo Asperamente*, or ‘roughly living,’ seemed to capture the content of the songs by both bands—Latino struggles and feminist struggles, living with such awareness was often abrasive, hard, rough. For me, after spending so many years feeling invisible, putting out a record with a cover image of a woman who looked like me felt like a personal victory. (*The Spitboy Rule* 117)

Bridging several of her multiple identities through this record and the “collaboration of message, sound, and mutual admiration” that characterize their band relationship contribute not only to the growing visibility of Latinxs in punk but also to Todd’s growing self-acceptance and self-love (118). The chapter ends with an anecdote about bringing her husband Inés to a Los Crudos show in the Bay Area a few years after Spitboy breaks up. A fan congratulates Inés after the show, mistaking him for one of the members of the band, and instead of reacting negatively, Cruz Gonzáles interprets this gesture as progress and “an indirect form of personal validation” (199). Once invisible, Latinxs in the punk scene were now being (wrongly) recognized as members of Los Crudos. The visibility that Los Crudos helps to establish for Latinx punks, and their support and comradery helps Todd become empowered to own her ethnicity in her journey to self-acceptance as a Xicana in a female punk band.

Transformative Experiences and Confronting Trauma

Several scenes in *The Spitboy Rule* describe transformative experiences brought about in the protagonist through musical performance. In the chapter titled “The Threat,” Spitboy spends the day in the studio with sound engineer Kevin Army recording their first self-titled record. Shortly before the band records and criticizes their overly feminine-sounding vocals for “The Threat,” Cruz Gonzáles briefly mentions an out-of-body experience produced from reliving the trauma of sexual assault by recording vocals for “Ultimate Violations” in the context of the band’s positive relationship with Army. She writes:

He didn’t seem at all fazed that I stopped between each take to shed a different item of clothing, first my shoes, then my socks, then the top I had been wearing over a tank top, probably some band T-shirt. He listened, looking concerned, when I described the sensation of floating up in the corner of the room viewing myself from above during the good take, exorcising my own painful experience with assault. (26)

In a similar fashion to Alice Bag’s “astral projection,” Todd describes a shift in consciousness brought about by a haunting recollection of sexual violence through screaming the backup vocals. During this altered state of consciousness, Todd experiences a splitting of the self, viewing herself from outside the physical body from above in the corner of the recording studio’s ceiling. She characterizes this experience as an exorcism that expels the emotional pain out of her physical body through singing the powerful lyrics. The song deals with the painful emotional and psychological consequences of abuse for victims as well as for the loved ones who share in the resulting

“powerlessness, the aloneness, the isolation,” and angrily reproaches those who joke about such suffering without empathy or understanding (Spitboy, *The Spitboy CD*.) The lyrics also criticize the failure of statistics to account for the emotional consequences in the victim and their community, speaking to a collective trauma. Thus, through her performance and this disembodied experience, Todd conjures and expels the collective pain felt by whole communities brought about by sexual violence in spiritual terms. In addition to her own experiences with sexual assault, Todd’s father abused her mother while pregnant with her. In this way, punk serves as a transcendent and transformative vehicle not only to stimulate critical consciousness, but also through which to collectively heal and develop resiliency across generations and communities.

Another scene in the memoir details a different kind of transcendent experience through punk rock performance to which Todd bears collective witness together with her bandmates and the audience as the opening band plays at a show in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the chapter titled “Spitboy in Little Rock.” Cruz Gonzáles recounts the welcoming experience she has in Little Rock, the only town that she ever fell in love with while on tour. While she writes of the decade-long connection between Little Rock and Bay Area punk due to the relocation of 1980s hardcore punk band Econochrist, the gentleness and compassion of the younger punks strike her, as if these punks belonged to a new breed. Not only is it Spitboy’s first time playing a covered outdoor amphitheater, but also the venue is located in an idyllic spot with a river and a bridge on one side and a grassy field covering the rest of the open-air space. As fans arrive, the hazy blue sky turns cloudy, and it starts pouring rain when the band Chino Horde gets on stage. Todd usually prefers to reserve pre-show time for quiet activities such as reading in the van, but she is

struck by Chino Horde's infectious energy, which animates her to participate in the excitement of the moment. Cruz Gonzáles describes the intensity of the onstage performance, accentuated by the explosive thunder and lightning of the storm in the background. She writes:

I remember looking from Karin and Adrienne and Paula and to the suddenly dark sky and the rain all around us. They looked worried too, for we couldn't be sure that Chino Horde or the rest of us wouldn't be electrocuted. It seemed that Mother Nature was trying to match the energy onstage, or even demanding that Chino Horde keep up, because the further Chino Horde got into their set, the harder it rained. I had never seen such a thing before, a group so intent on playing their music that what seemed to me a dangerous electrical storm was of no consequence. And for a moment I didn't want them to stop. The weather, the music, the young men playing their hearts out in front of us, the whole thing took my breath away. (*The Spitboy Rule* 46)

This time, rather than an out-of-body experience, Cruz Gonzáles describes an ethereal and sublime event brought upon by the combination of sheer energy of the band's performance and the intensity of nature that in that moment teeters on the edge of breathtaking and frightening. She continues:

And just when I didn't think I could take any more of the frightening weather and Chino Horde's intensity, Burt announced their last song and, just like that, the rain slowed, the clouds parted, and the sun burst through, lighting the sky. The audience couldn't help turning its attention to the sudden change overhead, to the sun shining down again on the bridge, creating a reflection on the water. I

remember looking at Karin, and Paula, and Adrienne, wide-eyed, relived, and in disbelief that such a thing could happen, at what we had just witnessed. Then as Burt, and Steve, and Jason strummed their final notes, and David hit his cymbals the final time, a glimmering rainbow fanned out across the whole sky. (46)

Cruz Gonzáles ends the chapter here, without any critical reflection on the experience.

Wedge between Chapter 8, “Shut Up and Play,” which details the band’s responses to sexist and misogynistic comments from audience members, and the section in which she narrates the band’s visit to Grandma Delia’s house in Chapter 10 titled “Race, Class, and Spitboy,” this anecdote presents a very different perspective on the transformative potential of punk. This spiritual event venerates the power of both nature and punk performance, both feeding off of and magnifying each other. Todd stands among her bandmates in awe of the transcendent event, speaking to a deeper potential of the transformative and enlightening power of punk to queer Latinx punks and beyond.

Spitboy: Radical Feminist Hardcore Punk Music

While *The Spitboy Rule* narrates the growing intersectional feminist consciousness in Michelle Cruz Gonzáles throughout her time as the drummer of Spitboy, the band’s music offers important insights into the band’s ideological stance and message. In line with this project’s goal of centering the multimedia cultural production of queer Latinx punk artists, the strategy of Chicana feminist artists, scholars, and activists such as Sonia Saldívar-Hull argue for the importance of alternative forms of knowledge production in defining Chicanx and Latinx feminisms. In *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature* (2000), she writes, “. . . [W]e have to

look in nontraditional places for our theories: in the prefaces to anthologies, in the interstices of autobiographies, in our cultural artifacts (the *cuentos*), and if we are fortunate to have access to a good library, in the essays published in marginalized journals not widely distributed by the dominant institutions” (46). In this way, nontraditional forms of cultural expression are valued for their epistemological contributions alongside more traditional forms of writing. As such, music, through lyrics, sound, and performance, has the potential to inspire and transform perspectives over time and space in unique ways.

As exemplified in Cruz Gonzáles’s memoir, Spitboy was committed to collectivity in all creative and logistical decision-making, a principle that also extended to writing lyrics. Cruz Gonzáles explains in her memoir, “People often commented on our live performances and the way we connected with one another and the audience. It probably helped that we all wrote lyrics. Adrienne always sang lead, and if she were singing lead on a song that I wrote, I would sing with her. This sort of collaboration worked the same way with songs written by Karin, Paula, and later Dominique” (55). This practice represents a central tenet of the band’s own version of radical punk feminism, which taps into powerful histories of coalitional movements within Black and Third World feminisms, such as in the foundational text *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981). While Alice Bag draws on these traditions to complicate and rewrite the dominant historical narrative of the Chicano Moratorium in her song “White Justice,” Spitboy looks to the feminist theories of *Bridge* and Chicanx writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga. These writers paved the way for third wave feminism, a movement which sought to redefine exclusionary feminist ideologies and movements that

relied on gender as its sole analytical factor. Essays in this anthology, such as the famous “A Black Feminist Statement” by the black feminist lesbian organization Combahee River Collective and Moraga’s “La Güera,” emphasize the importance of collective processes and a nonhierarchical distribution of power to their revolutionary goals, as exemplified when Moraga writes, “The real power, as you and I well know, is collective” (29).

Spitboy makes conscious efforts to put into practice collectivity as a political ideal, whatever their stance on riot grrrl, and Cruz Gonzáles’s angry reaction in particular demonstrates important tensions embedded in a utopian concept. In her analysis of the riot grrrl movement, Nguyen complicates its central principles of revolutionary girl love and intimacy to critique the ways in which race continued to represent an obstacle for the movement’s idealistic collective ethos. She turns to the zine *Mamacita* by Bianca Ortiz to exemplify the burden of representation and the weight of pedagogy on people of color and writes, “Bianca Ortiz criticized the violence of intimacy as a salve to racism, citing her feeling of time and emotional labor wasted writing personal letters to ‘one million white girls,’ especially where women of color critics (such as herself) are relegated to the role of educator” (180). This echoes the central image in the *Bridge* anthology, which is explored in a particularly poignant way in Kate Rushin’s “The Bridge Poem.” The poem starts off with frustration:

“I’ve had enough

I’m sick of seeing and touching

Both sides of things

Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody. (xxxiv)

She lists the individuals and groups for whom she must act as a translator, having to take on the role of the educator as a queer woman of color to privileged subjects that walk over her back, again and again. Her stance towards the end of the poem, however, rejects the imposed role of the embodied metaphor declaring, “The bridge I must be / Is the bridge to my own power,” privileging her self-care and empowerment (xxxiv).

While the bridge metaphor certainly speaks visually to the geographical and theoretical notion of the borderlands so important to Chicanx and Latinx culture, this notion of translation regarding gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class is the subject of the Spitboy song “Wizened.” This song, along with the others analyzed in this section, was written by Cruz Gonzáles, a fact that she revealed in her blog in early 2015.

“Wizened” is found on the 1995 split album that Spitboy released with Los Crudos, mentioned above and titled *Viviendo Asperamente / Roughly Living*. The song opens with crunchy palm muted guitar strokes that create an ominous tone. Lead singer Adrienne screams twice, accusingly, “You are guilty / Your past, your pain amount to nothing,” as the vocals, bass, and drums come in all together (Spitboy and Los Crudos). In the next verse, Cruz Gonzáles joins in on backup vocals from behind the drums as they layer their angry shouts, “Sentenced to death / Now it’s your turn to die / Senseless killing,” their layered voices audibly reproducing the tension and indignation that their words express. Adrienne repeats the line “It’s our prerogative / We the people sentence you to death” twice, each time with a slightly different cadence, evoking the spontaneity of a verbal confrontation. She screams the first two lines of the next verse, which directly condemn the second person, “Your guilt / Your consequence,” and Cruz Gonzáles chimes in as

they switch to first-person plural and defend their stance, “We are justified / Suffer the consequences.”

The next verse declares a refusal to take the responsibility of doing the work of unpacking the problem at hand:

With our blinders fastened tight

We’ve chosen not to look

Any deeper into the root of this problem

For if we did, our eyes would be gouged out

By the blinding ugliness that our system has created (Spitboy and Los Crudos)

Adrienne starts the verse off, but around the third line, Cruz Gonzáles chimes in, building the tension as they join together to scream the chorus:

We don’t take responsibility

We don’t take responsibility

We won’t take responsibility

For your action. (Spitboy and Los Crudos)

Their screams are dissonant and jarring to their ear as they communicate to the accused oppressor that it is not their responsibility as women to do the emotional labor of unpacking sexism, misogyny, and gendered violence for men. They refuse to be complicit in cisheteropatriarchal structures that blame women for their oppression and propagate rape culture. Adrienne screams the final verse:

You

Your past

Your pain

Mean nothing

You don't and never have amounted to anything. (Spitboy and Los Crudos)

She repeats the last line over and over until returning to the chorus, then returning to this last verse again. The instruments stop and Adrienne says in an exasperated breath, "You don't and never have amounted to anything." This last verse discredits the notion of appealing to one's past experiences as an excuse for violence or upholding male (or other) privileges at the expense of marginalized subjects. In writing these lyrics and participating in the vocals, Cruz Gonzáles also speaks from an intersectional positionality, in that she is a bisexual Latinx woman creating links between her own development of punk feminist consciousness and a history of women of color feminisms.

Another Spitboy song for which Cruz Gonzáles wrote the lyrics and participated vocally, and which also deals with violence against women is "Ultimate Violations," mentioned in the previous discussion of her memoir as the song she is recording when she has an out-of-body experience as a response to personal and collective trauma resulting from sexual assault. The song was released in 1994 on Spitboy's self-titled album, and it starts off with a collage of recorded voices discussing supporting and empowering women who are raped, consent and boundaries, and the role of power in cases of sexual assault. A high-pitched, palm muted guitar comes in during the last voice, and when the other instruments drop in, layered voices scream, "Sister daughter mother lover wife" (Spitboy, *The Spitboy CD*). Both Adrienne and Cruz Gonzáles scream the lyrics during the whole song, as they release agonizing shouts that speak to the painful experience of being victimized or loving a victim of sexual violence:

Loved by man

Not just another victim

Statistics show no pain or feelings of the humiliations the powerlessness the
aloneness the isolation

They too feel the pain

They too need to heal

They too feel the powerlessness the aloneness the isolation

As they try to bring her back to life

Not just another victim. (Spitboy, *The Spitboy CD*).

The notion of collective or historical trauma is not new to the field of US Latinx studies. Many scholars looking at fictional migration narratives have argued that narrative witnessing of collective trauma by a US Latinx community can be a resolution as a means to heal past atrocities.²⁸ In her article about Guatemalan American writer Héctor Tobar's novel *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998), however, Crystine Miller challenges this view in that it depicts ongoing traumatic consequences of US imperialism in Latin America and experiences of discrimination and oppression suffered by Guatemalans in the US. She argues that "migration to and immigration status within the United States [are] additional layers of trauma" (365). Spitboy's "Ultimate Violations," by addressing both the individual and collective traumatic effects of sexual violence, speaks to the continuous traumas experienced by women in the US, especially queer women of color. Spitboy's screams draw important connections among victims, families, and intergenerational relationships by cathartically expressing anger at the collective

²⁸ See for example Irizarry (2005), Caminero-Santangelo (2009b), and Vázquez (2011).

traumatic experience of women who must deal with past, ongoing, or potential sexual violations. By sharing this message through music, Spitboy makes possible not only the diffusion of knowledge and awareness among the punk community but also opens a space for collective sharing of ideas and experiences and the potential for developing transgenerational and communal resiliency and healing.

In a similar thematic vein, “Motivated by Fear,” also found on Spitboy’s self-titled album, vividly portrays the fear-inducing experience of being in an abusive relationship. The song starts with a bass riff followed by the drums, the guitar, and finally the vocals, which slowly build from a speaking voice to a scream that gradually increases in intensity and aggression. Adrienne sings:

Love I love you

Respect I respect you

Fear I fear you

Motivated by fear

Humiliation keeps my mouth shut. ((Spitboy, *The Spitboy CD*).

These words describe the various emotions felt by the victim in an abusive relationship which often result in the abused staying in the abusive relationship. Adrienne shouts about the performative happiness that the victim shows to the world, and which comes from a place of fear, “Coverup hides the scars / Good acting keeps this smile on my face / Motivated by fear.” The last lines of the song speak to the lack of awareness among the public of the signs of domestic abuse, “No one suspects except those who know better / No one ever suspects but me I know better.” The use of the first person throughout the song speaks from the perspective of the victim, but its use in the last line, emphasized by

the repetitive pronoun “me” before the personal pronoun “I,” stresses familiarity with the situation. On the recording after this verse that presents the last words in the lyrics sheet from the album insert, Adrienne and Cruz Gonzáles scream, “Love! Respect! Fear!” as a catchy guitar riff closes out the song, followed by spoken words, “Sometimes you have to ask yourself, how did I get here, where did I go, and when does it end,” and the guitar, bass, and drums come together to hit one last note to drive the point home. These last lines serve as an empathetic message to victims from a personal perspective to think critically about their situation in an effort to establish real connections between the Spitwomen’s lived experiences and those of their fanbase.

In her blog, Michelle Cruz Gonzáles describes the process of writing “Seriously,” Spitboy’s first song. She had written the lyrics and music with her limited guitar skills about being sexually harassed at a party in Oakland. She describes the song: “[w]hat it lacks in musical maturity it makes up for in toughness and a certain vulnerability. Plus it has those three quick hard stops in in the second verse right before the chorus” (Cruz Gonzáles, “Seriously”). The song opens with a chunky guitar as Adrienne slowly sings in a lower tone, not characteristic of their later sound:

Subtle cues warn me
I’m on to you
You’re spewing your best
but babe

Manipulative charm does not have me impressed. (Cruz Gonzáles, “Seriously”) The lyrics go on to describe the chauvinistic attitude of treating women as “All girls [who] play hard to get” and not taking women’s feelings or perspectives seriously. In the

same blog entry, Cruz Gonzáles goes on to describe “[t]he odd opening that does allow for the welling of emotion and the satisfaction of screaming ‘Well, honey, I got news for you!’” While simplistic in its song writing, “Seriously” demonstrates many of Spitboy’s central ideologies in rejecting the disempowerment of women at the hands of men who refer to them as “girls,” echoing some of their qualms with the riot grrrl movement. By employing and directing the terms of endearment “honey,” and “babe” at the second person supposed male oppressor, Cruz Gonzáles seeks to reverse the power relations reproduced in cisheteronormative relationships and use sarcasm to disempower or inferiorize men who display signs of toxic masculinity.

Conclusions

This chapter explored the works of Michelle Cruz Gonzáles, drummer and lyricist of 1990s radical feminist hardcore punk band Spitboy, through her memoir that chronicles her years as Todd Spitboy and a selection of Spitboy songs to which she contributed lyrics, drums, and vocals. In addition to contributing to this project’s archive of queer Latinx punk artists whose work presents a challenge to mainstream “white riot” punk narratives, Cruz Gonzáles’s work offers important insight into an intersectional punk feminism that was happening concurrently with the more mainstream feminist punk movement of riot grrrl and 1990s punk feminisms that remain influential to this day, a legacy with which punk theorists are still trying to grapple. This is achieved through an analysis of how she negotiated her minoritarian subjectivity in the 1990s, a period marked by political color-blindness that was reflected in the punk scene, as well as how her musical production in Spitboy contributed to a reformulation of punk feminism.

Reading these works together in the context of queer Latinx punk demonstrates the important processes involved in the development of critical consciousness through an intersectional and transnational rereading of punk feminisms.

Cruz Gonzáles's work also engages in shared dialogues with other artists studied in this project, including the issue of age and punk to which Alice Bag speaks in her song "Se Cree Joven." In her blog Cruz González assumes the username "Perimeno Ponkera," the first term a reference to perimenopause or the period before menopause when the ovaries gradually produce less estrogen, and the second "female punk" in a phonetic Spanish, defying ageist accounts of punk and embracing the material reality of age for cisgender women. She has also directly collaborated with Martín Crudo, as mentioned above, and she participated in a book reading at his event *Desafinados* in celebration of Los Crudos's 25th anniversary, and which featured an exposition that highlighted the impact of Latinx punk in Chicago. Like some of the other artists in this study, Cruz Gonzáles has turned to teaching, and she is currently an English instructor at a community college. She participates in the Puente Project, a program which connects disadvantaged students to mentors and counseling programs. Throughout her individual and collaborative projects, Michelle Cruz Gonzáles represents a unique voice in the history of queer Latinx punk in reformulating dominant exclusionary narratives, showing us how a "perimeno ponkera" can still simultaneously engage critically with punk and use punk as a catalyst for supporting and transforming resistance and activism.

Chapter IV: Cristina “Cristy Road” Carrera

Introduction



Fig. 26. *SOBREVIVIR: Jade Payne and Mars Ganito of Aye Nako* by Cristy C. Road, 2015, croadcore.org/drawings/ayenako2.jpg. JPEG file.

Fig. 27. *SOBREVIVIR: Martin Sorrondeguy of Los Crudos, Limp Wrist* by Cristy C. Road, 2015, croadcore.org/drawings/MARTIN.jpg. JPEG file.

Fig. 28. *SOBREVIVIR: Victoria Ruiz of Downtown Boys, Malportado Kids* by Cristy C. Road, 2015, croadcore.org/drawings/victoriaruiz.jpg. JPEG file.

Martín Crudo clutches a microphone in his hand sustaining its chord in the other (see fig. 27). His mouth is open mid-scream, his face turned slightly away. The queer punk icon’s characteristic hardcore stance is illustrated through his tense bodily positioning, his arms taut, shadows highlighting the textural detail of his hairy torso, the creases in his small brown shorts threatening their material limits as he stands in an active straddle. The excesses of playful semiotic coding that characterize artist Cristy C. Road’s visual works are in dialogue with each other, overlapping and intertwining to draw the viewer’s eye around the frame in search of more hidden meanings. Around his neck,

Martín sports a red handkerchief, suggesting references to the color-coded semiotic system or “flagging” prevalent among day male casual-sex seekers or BDSM practitioners around the world to signal the desire for certain sexual acts as a subtle cruising tool. Around his shoulders he wears a studded harness as a nod to gay leather subcultures and which also forms a horseshoe shape framing the round portrait in the classic style of portrait miniatures.

The phrase “Dejanos En Paz” (sic) in script encloses the shape in an arch around the top of the image, the command in first person plural in the unaccented Spanish of a heritage speaker signaling a diverse group of queer punks of color and their supportive communities demanding peace and freedom from centuries of oppression and violence through punk performance. In the bottom half of the background behind Martín is a large crowd of diverse punks, hands in the air and mouths open as they sing and participate in Martín’s performance. Between his legs is merchandise from Los Crudos and Limp Wrist, along with a sticker with a queer fist that reads “LOVE HARDCORE HATE HOMOPHOBIA.” The torsos of two figures jut out of the upper right side: that of Martín’s drag alter ego “Garlika Stanx,” as whom he performs in *The Shhh* with Alice Bag, wearing a gray feminine bow blouse, heavy winged eyeliner, bright red lips, and black bowed headband over his bald head; and that of Cristy Road’s abuelita Yaya, about whom Road released an illustrated tribute after her passing in 2015. A slimy pink vine resembling a tongue weaves around the gray leather studded frame and opens to blooming flowers that encircle Yaya. Green palm leaves jut out from either side arching over the crowd of punks, standing in contrast to the dystopic pink clouds that fill the sky. The graffiti writing on an old brick building, telephone lines in the distance, stands

behind the crowd on the left side and reads “MEMORIES ARE SACRED,” and scattered pieces of trash and miscellaneous objects fly out of the crowd and up into the air. Within the confines of this portrait miniature, Road makes visible alternative heroes, depicts the power of collectivity, and emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive spaces, enclosed within a delicate keepsake to honor the legacies and contributions of queer punks of color through memory.

Cristy Road’s depiction of Martín Crudo is one of three portraits in a series titled *SOBREVIVIR: Queer Punx of Color* (2015, mixed media; see figures 26, 27, and 28). The other two portraits feature Jade Payne and Mars Ganito of Aye Nako and Victoria Ruiz of Downtown Boys and Malportado Kids. The featured figures are all depicted in mid-performance, combining Road’s characteristic style, which mixes scatological, spiritual, and politically charged elements with the traditional elements of portraiture. The phrases “Leaving The Body” and “Bruja Cosmica,” (sic) respectively, form the upper arches of the frames that encircle the works. The drawings, a combination of mixed media including ink, marker, white out, and Gelly Roll pens, each feature important figures in contemporary punk who challenge mainstream representations of the subculture as a “white riot.”

The portrait of Aye Nako, a Brooklyn-based punk band that promotes community-based, anti-capitalist, and LGBTQ-friendly ideologies, has queer POC guitarists Jade and Mars as the focus, with drummer Sheena and bassist Joe as minor figures at the bottom. This work is framed by horseshoe shaped vines that bloom crystals as they reach the words “Leaving The Body,” which arch over the top. In the background are floral elements, videogame paraphernalia, and planets, mixing elements of nature,

magic, and technology and taking the focus off of the queer POC body as the only site of expression.

The third portrait features Mexican American vocalist Victoria Ruiz of horned political punk bands Downtown Boys and Malportado Kids. Downtown Boys formed after tuba player Joey La Neve DeFrancesco and Ruiz met while working at a Rhode Island hotel. In a YouTube video called “Joey Quits” that later went viral, DeFrancesco publicly resigned from his job after failed attempts at forming a union, accompanied by his bandmates from What Cheer? Brigade performing alongside him. Aside from denouncing oppressive institutions and discourses such as racism, queerphobia, capitalism, fascism, and the prison-industrial complex in Downtown Boys’ lyrics, Ruiz and DeFrancesco collaborated with grassroots advocacy group Demand Progress to launch the online magazine Spark Mag that features underground and radical artists and connects fans to organizing work. Road captures Ruiz’s striking on-stage presence as she passionately sings into the microphone sustained by her left hand. Her body thrusts out of the image from behind a large dark crowd that resembles a protest or an angry mob, and her dark pinned-up curls and her right hand project out of the frame, giving the illusion that she is larger than life. Her other band members at the base of the frame are tiny in comparison to her powerful presence, as she is adorned with a flowing bright pink cape covering a brown shirt with the words “I JUST LOOK ILLEGAL” scribbled in green. Flowers, cacti, and a pineapple creep up the right side of the frame in the foreground, while brown hills and seemingly empty buildings are far in the distance, dotted with looming telephone wires. Over her head arch the words “Bruja Cosmica,” (sic) as this caped feminist superhero challenges racist stereotypes projected onto Latinxs in the US,

reclaiming oppressive discourses surrounding *brujería* and witchcraft, her political and ideological positionality elevated to divine status.

The three works that comprise *SOBREVIVIR* set the stage for my discussion of the queer Latinx punk artist Cristy Road in their engagement with queer worldmaking by challenging cisheteronormative patriarchal constructs and notions through their depiction of non-binary subjectivities, representation of counternarratives and resistant ideologies, interventions into dominant representations of punk, and the act of finding survival and resilience through an otherworldly connection with nonnormative punk icons. As in the preceding chapters, this chapter examines multimedia cultural production in the context of queer Latinx punk. This is achieved through an analysis of Road's multimedia works to explore the representation of intersectional and transnational subjectivities and perspectives, the formation and valorization of alternative epistemologies, and how her works challenge dominant "white riot" punk narratives through illustrated memoir and visual art. In the first section, I analyze Road's three illustrated memoirs, *Indestructible*, *Bad Habits*, and *Spit and Passion* to demonstrate the ways in which her protagonists find self-empowerment in punk rock by highlighting moments of everyday resistance in text and image seen in the questioning, unlearning, and re-signifying of oppressive cultural discourses dictated by neoliberal capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy including gender norms, sexuality, pleasure, desire, mental health, success, trauma, and love. Important theoretical concepts framing my discussions in this section include Foucault's notion of transgression, Judith Butler's theory of performativity, and Cathy Caruth's work in trauma theory. In the second section, I present her deck *The Next World Tarot* to discuss how her work dialogues with alternative spiritual practices and epistemologies that

incorporate intersectional, transnational, and queer perspectives and traditions. By ending with Cristy Road's interpretation of Tarot, this chapter draws important connections with transnational and transgenerational histories of resistance through spirituality, collectivity, and dialogue, tapping into a critical consciousness built collectively by many artists, activists, and participants, some of which are honored in this project.

The Life and Work of Cristy C. Road

Cristy C. Road is a Miami-born Cuban-American artist, musician, and activist who legally changed her name from Cristina Carrera to the name of a Green Day song. Road started her self-published *GREEN'ZINE* in 1997, which started as a reaction against what she perceived as the classism behind punk fans' rejection of the band upon their explosion into mainstream popularity in 1994. The zine ended up serving as her gateway into life-writing as she transitioned from discussing Green Day's lyrical questioning of religion and sexuality to writing personal stories about being queer in the punk rock community. Road published her first illustrated autobiographical work *Indestructible* in 2006, a short narrative about high school. Her second novel titled *Bad Habits: A Love Story*, published in 2008, is a work of autofiction that chronicles protagonist Car's experiences as a young adult shortly after moving from Miami to New York City. Road's most recent book is a memoir in the form of a graphic novel titled *Spit and Passion* (2012) that reflects on her experiences as a queer Cuban-American 12-year-old surviving in the metaphorical closet. Together, these works reflect on the formative years of adolescence and young adulthood of a queer Latinx punk navigating the effects of oppression and trauma and searching for self-love.

Cristy Road was the guitarist and lead singer of The Homewreckers and is currently the guitarist and lead singer of the punk band Choked Up. She is most recognized as a visual artist, however. Her illustrations adorn album covers, magazines, posters, and artwork for social justice organizations. As described above, she completed a series of portraits of “queer punks of color,” titled *SOBREVIVIR* (2015), including representations of Martín Crudo and Victoria Ruiz of Downtown Boys to document and make visible the diversity of punk. Road also participates in spoken word events and tours, makes art for activist projects and collectives, and maintains a blog. Her most recent project is *The Next World Tarot* (2017), a 78-card tarot deck that participates in longstanding transnational traditions of storytelling and inserts representations of queer people of color into the ancient spiritual practice. By telling stories about tearing down systematic oppression, alternative epistemologies, community accountability and support, and embodied self-love, *The Next World Tarot* enacts practices of queer worldmaking that challenge the values, structures, and everyday practices dictated by cisheteronormative patriarchy.

A Series of Illustrated Memoirs: Life Writing Meets the Graphic Novel

In the first and third chapters, I explore several examples of queer Latinx life writing by Alice Bag and Michelle Cruz Gonzáles in which the authors narrate their personal stories through short episodic chapters with scattered photographs of the past to visually substantiate their credibility and epistemic authority. Artist Cristy Road’s life writing, however, takes a slightly different form that further pushes the limits of the genre through the blending of autobiography and fiction, text and image. Road’s works transcend institutionally dictated genre classification in their content, presentation, and

style due to their visual-textual interplay. Other Latinx writers have contributed to this archive of hybrid illustrated narratives in contemporary US Latinx literature such as Sandra Cisneros and her illustrated work, *¿Have You Seen Marie?* (2012), and Erika López, queer Puerto Rican writer of such works as *Flaming Iguanas: An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing* (1997) and *They Call Me Mad Dog!: A Story for Bitter, Lonely People* (1998), among others.

In addition to the written and visual content of Road's hybrid memoirs, the covers of her works themselves incite curiosity. Not only do we notice the striking imagery and bold lettering of the covers, but the books are unusual in size and shape. Their unique "paratextuality," to use Gerard Genette's term, sets them apart both visually and physically from other, more traditional novels and other genres such as the comic book and graphic novel. The paratext is, according to Genette:

More than a boundary or a sealed border . . . a threshold, . . . fringe [that] constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it.

(1-2)

The covers of Road's works reflect a punk aesthetic and ideology that characterizes much of her artistic production (see figures 29, 30, and 31). The text of the body of her first illustrated narrative *Indestructible* evokes the font of a typewriter. The combination of offbeat typewriter style font, black-and-white graphic imagery, and speech balloons throughout Road's works demonstrate the intentionality of these tactics as a medium of

representation, drawing connections with DIY aesthetics, practices, and ideologies, reminiscent of zine culture, and strongly evocative of the *rasquachismo* sensibility. The cover art as well as the illustrations that form part of the narratives in all three memoirs are easily reproducible in their monochromatic color scheme, and their covers depict the gritty materiality of urban surfaces and bodies. On the cover of *Bad Habits*, protagonist Car holds her exposed heart in her hand by the ventricle, still attached to the body as the rib cage is exposed and bleeding (see. Fig. 30). On the cover of *Spit and Passion*, the young Road's brain is exposed through a ripped Florida Marlins baseball cap, and the insides of her chest are held in place with duct tape in the shape of an "x" as pieces of her brain shoot out and form an aureole that portrays her grotesque sacredness (see fig. 31).

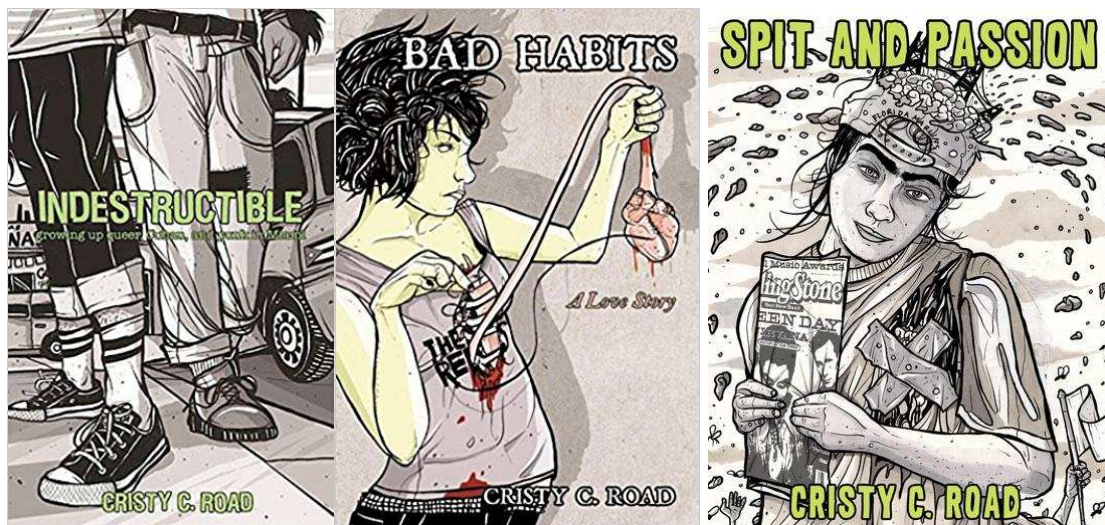


Fig. 29. Cover of *Indestructible* by Cristy C. Road (2006).

Fig. 30. Cover of *Bad Habits: A Love Story* by Cristy C. Road (2008).

Fig. 31. Cover of *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (2012).

While in some texts, images would be considered part of the paratext, the images in Road's works hold just as much meaning as the written text. In their study of women, autobiography, image, and performance, Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith stress the frequency of women's artistic production and performance of the autobiographical

occurring “at the interface of the domains of visibility (image) and textuality . . . enabl[ing] self-imaging, auto-inquiry, and cultural critique” (7). At the interface, or the borderlands if you will, readings of the text and image negotiate, interrogate, complement, and at times, contest each other. Author-artists that create multi-media texts such as Road texture this interface in different ways in order to mobilize visual and textual regimes (21).

Despite Road’s unstable and peripheral relationship with the graphic novel genre, excerpts of her work have very recently been featured in collections of works by POC comic book and graphic novel author-artists including a chapter on *Spit and Passion* published in a collection on multiethnic graphic novels (Cutter and Schlund-Vials 2018), as well as in an anthology featuring queer transnational Hispanic Caribbean women artists (Irene del Rio Gabiola 2017).²⁹ Frederick Luis Aldama, the most well-known critic on Latinx comics, interviewed Cristy Road about her narrative style in his most recent publication, *Latino/a Children’s and Young Adult Writers on the Art of Storytelling* (2018). His foundational work, *Your Brain on Latino Comics* (2009), provides the most comprehensive study to date on the topic. While he recognizes the “overlap between the elements that make up comic books and comic strips as storytelling media and those of pictorial narratives, novels, and films, among others,” he argues that comic books and comic strips actively choose to tell stories in that form for the purpose of engaging audiences and portraying their perspectives on reality through a particular interplay of visual and verbal as well as other formal elements (8-9).

²⁹ Several of Cristy Road’s narrative pieces are included in anthologies featuring queer girls such as *Baby Remember My Name: An Anthology of New Queer Girl Writing* (2007) edited by Michelle Tea, *Live Through This: On Creativity and Self-Destruction* (2008) edited by Sabrina Chapadjiev, and *Sister Spit: Writing, Rants & Reminiscence from the Road* (2012) edited by Michelle Tea.

A discussion of Latinx participation in the graphic novel genre necessitates the inclusion of Los Bros Hernandez and their long-running underground comic book series *Love and Rockets*. Jaime Hernandez and his *Las Locas* storyline also known as *Hoppers 13* narrates the adventures of young Chicanxs in the fictional town of Hoppers, California. The narrative often focuses on the on-again off-again relationship between Margarita Luisa “Maggie” Mascarrillo and Esperanza “Hokey” Leticia Glass. The queer and Latinx content of *Las Locas* is framed by a punk aesthetic and chocked full of queer content, characters, and storylines, many of the female characters in nontraditional gender roles challenging and clashing with patriarchal structures such as “Maggie the Mechanic.” Jonathan Risner writes about their sexualities as being portrayed with an implied ambiguity (39-45). Jaime Hernandez himself describes the culture of this fictionalized version of his real hometown as “where punk and *cholo* culture came together” (Aldama, *Spilling the Beans* 121). Chicanx cultural elements saturate the series as seen in the use of code-switching and the backdrop of the Latinx Barrio Huerta. However, as Risner points out, “while the amalgam’s *chola/o* ingredient does not necessarily inform a dynamic of fluid sexual identities among female characters in Jaime’s work, punk does” (44). This observation echoes Alice Bag’s characterization of the fluidity that was embraced in the thriving LA punk scene in the 1970s and early 1980s.

While the genre is still heavily male-dominated, there are several important yet understudied female Latinx graphic novelists or comic book author-artists such as Laura

Molina and her now out of print comic *Cihualyaomiquiz, the Jaguar*.³⁰ Her protagonist in her fierce, goddess-summoning, racist-fighting attitude gives a priceless dark, comedic, yet satisfying last line: “you forced me to use violence to defend myself. But you guys are pretty lucky tonight anyway. After all . . . my ancestors used to eat their enemies. Viva la Raza! Nazi punks, see ya later” (Molina). Another relevant Latinx author-artist is Roberta Gregory, known for being one of the first lesbian comic book artists ever published as well as for her dark and hilarious character Bitchy Bitch, the self-centered, self-defeating, and racist protagonist of the Fangraphics Books series *Naughty Bits*.³¹ Gregory is much more often cited in studies of feminist and lesbian histories of comics than in Latinx collections.

Indestructible

Cristy Road’s first formally published work, *Indestructible*, offers a brief yet detailed depiction of adolescence for queer Latinx punk rocker Cristy Road in 1990s Miami. The combination of wonky typewriter-style font and black and white illustrations printed in Xerox-style draw clear connections with her zine-making days. In its just under 100 pages, *Indestructible* depicts an emotional journey filled with sexual curiosity, chemical experimentation, and learning to question everything as the young protagonist

³⁰ Laura Molina’s *Cihualyaomiquiz, the Jaguar* features the superhero(ine) trope of many comics with a twist. The “scholar of the law” in regular life slips into her animal double persona, the Jaguar Woman or “Cihualyaomiquiz” in Nahuatl, to fight against the contemporary (1996) California backlash against civil rights and people of color. She encounters two white power skinheads and promptly fights them and wins. The comic ends on a strangely humorous note cited above.

³¹ Both Laura Molina and Roberta Gregory are acknowledged for their contributions to the Latinx comic book archive in Aldama’s *Your Brain on Latino Comics*.

struggles to simultaneously navigate the difficulties of adolescence and the oppressive discourses she encounters as a young, angry, queer Latinx punk.

Road's protagonist Cristy is 12-years old at the start of the novel, and her feelings surrounding adolescence and being a "girl" are ambiguous and defiant. Her androgyny extends from physical appearance to performative practices, and upon being scolded about what a "self-respecting pubescent Cuban girl should do," she chooses "to perpetuate unruliness," eating out of the trash and making earrings out of live reptiles (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 1). Her unibrow and masculine style are illustrated in an accompanying image that depicts the protagonist in a backwards baseball cap and a loose-fitting Aerosmith t-shirt with a rebellious expression on her face as two boys stand behind her laughing and the silhouettes of other children play on a jungle gym in the distance, portraying her outsider status and the gravity of her struggles as other children play carefree (see fig. 32).



Fig. 32. Excerpt from *Indestructible* by Cristy C. Road (ch. 1).

Cristy must negotiate the conflicting values and ideologies of her Cuban family and the surrounding Latinx neighborhood in Miami as well as the outside perspectives that she encounters at school. She associates beauty standards dictating thinness, concealed bodily smells, and shaved thighs as well as leftist ideas such as vegetarianism with dominant white culture that stands in contrast to her Cuban family's appreciation of curvaceous female bodies and carnivorous diet in which they sauté "everything in pork" (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 1). She gives in to pressures to shave her unibrow into two despite her mother's criticism, gets in fights, and struggles with eating disorders. An illustration features a female figure shaving her unibrow over the bathroom sink in front of a mirror wearing only a bra (see fig. 33). Black hairs cover her forearm and creep out of her armpit and her waistband. Photographs of women's body parts hang from the tiled wall under the mirror, some portraying idealized images of women and others with thick body hair, showing the impact of conflicting body standards.

After none of her classmates shows up at her birthday party, a last attempt to embrace mainstream girlhood and popularity, rumors spread that she invited the popular girls because she is a "dyke." Her friend Eugene, a tall Colombian 8th-grader, consoles her. He thinks she's cool for openly discussing masturbation and accepts her undefinable sexuality. Eugene introduces Cristy to punk rock as an inclusive community that values queerness and angry girls, where, unlike junior high, the only rule for acceptance is showing up (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 2).

Cristy finds a group of like-minded punk rock misfits to call her friends. An illustration of five teenagers hanging out outside of school behind bleachers accompanies the text (see. fig. 34). Diverse in gender expression and race, they are all visually

presenting as punk rock in their clothes: baggy t-shirts adorned with screen-printed band logos, hoodies with sewn-on band patches, and the emblematic gas-station uniform shirt with the name sewed above the breast-pocket popularized by pop punk bands of the early 1990s by musicians such as Billy Joe Armstrong of Green Day. Their facial expressions and postures exemplify their status as outsiders: sneering faces convey discontent; hoods cover their heads and sunglasses covering their eyes on to suggest alienation; the guy in the gas-station uniform plays air guitar while the two figures in the front hold cans and bottles of alcohol.



Fig. 33. Excerpt from *Indestructible* by Cristy C. Road (ch. 3).

Fig. 34. Excerpt from *Indestructible* by Cristy C. Road (ch. 2).

The group spends much of their time searching for explanations for their societal qualms and feelings of repression rather than reproducing oppressive discourses through language. Cristy reflects on using small penis-size as an insult in response to sexist

remarks by boys at school and why. In spite of being raised by three strong, independent women, she feels angry and hateful towards other girls. She realizes this behavior is a result of her “socialization,” and vows to deconstruct it. Road writes of her friends and her, “We had questions like Why do women compete? Why do men abuse power? Why doesn’t anyone think its normal that I masturbate? Why does the way I pee, the way I fuck, or the way my chest looks dictate the language that’s acceptable for me to use? We aren’t a malfunctioning species- were just taught to be that way” (sic; Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 4). This inquisitive impulse helps Cristy and her friends to unlearn some of these negative patterns and critique the institutions that reproduce them such as the media. However, this process of (un)learning also helps her realize that her rejection of masculinity is limited to boys; she likes it in girls.

The questioning spirit of punk rock leads Cristy to complicate polemic issues within the punk community from her positionality as a queer Latinx punk who grew up working-class. At age fourteen, she rejects the “rich white model of success and commonality,” but also acknowledges the limiting effects of growing up in economic disenfranchisement on goals and dreams for the future. She proposes her own definition of “selling-out,” described as “betraying the honesty and sacredness of our culture. Selling out could exist in any setting – it was any infidelity of one’s personal morals” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 3). She extends the definition of selling-out to other spaces of belonging, but then asks, “did it make sense to defy these morals because we were broke? Did it make sense to defy these morals because we needed to heal from faltering mental health?” (ch. 3). By including socioeconomic status and mental health in her analysis of selling-out, Road incorporates an intersectional perspective on the perpetual argument in

punk rock that problematizes the stereotypical white, middle-class punk experience. She reflects on the power of writing zines in helping her find a space of sanctuary to explore this and other opinions on punk, gender, and adolescent turmoil. She narrates, “I wrote a fanzine that included narratives on why I didn’t think Green Day fully damaged punk rock because they kept this kid alive when I knew my home-life was eighty percent heartache” (ch. 3). In reframing the dominant narrative surrounding Green Day’s selling-out with the 1994 major label release and massive commercial success of their album *Dookie*, Road prioritizes the importance of accessibility and exposure of punk rock to more isolated fans and the emotional impact of their music on her personal wellbeing and survival rather than succumbing to dominant narratives of success surrounding money and fame.

Despite wanting to embrace her *Latinidad*, promiscuity, homoerotic desires, and rejection of normativity, Cristy struggles with managing the pressures and tensions she negotiates both at school and at home. The punk scene in Miami reflects the 80% Latinx population of her school and public spaces, and at punk shows, she feels “Latina enough” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 5). The dominant representation of punk rock in the early 1990s, however, is not the “subversion of mainstream culture” that Cristy envisions. Her predominantly Latinx peers in high school and their mothers question her submission to what they consider a white, male phenomenon, propagated through mainstream media such as MTV. To her friends and classmates, listening to punk music culturally whitens her and makes her a “dyke.”

Whereas punk rock becomes a means for Cristy to avoid the pitfalls of trying to fit in, it’s impossible for her to deny certain class and ethnic commonalities that manifest

in cultural customs and political ideologies amongst her classmates, “where thick is beautiful and motherhood is revolutionary” and “a Cuban grandmother ‘aint nothing to fuck with” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 6). She debates with her friends the tensions between the social and political ideologies of Cuban Revolutionaries and Catholic exiles and questions why they all condemn homosexuality, feeling alienated from the various cultures with which she wants to identify.

At times, Cristy loses her resisting impulses and gives in to these feelings of isolation and judgement. While she finds herself attracted to both girls and boys, she blames an openly queer girl and her crush Selene for being tormented and bullied for her sexuality, and in turn, also blames herself. Her self-deprecating impulses extend to other qualities that she considers weaknesses or faults. She writes, “I told myself that I asked for it, when a kid I’d rather spit on, tried to coerce me into fucking. I told myself I asked for the scars, the discomfort and the eating disorders . . . I told myself Selene probably asked for it too. We were all at fault, I thought” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 7). This conflicting mix of internalized sexism and homophobia and the desire for acceptance drive her to seek temporary refuge through promiscuity and mind-altering chemicals.

While Cristy finds her Cuban culture to be politically progressive in some ways, sexuality is not a topic open for discussion in her family, and she feels that queerness is more repressed than in dominant white culture. She develops a long-distance relationship with a queer Chicana from southern California through letters and learns about the possible consequences of coming out to a conservative Latinx family. Her pen pal Yami gets kicked out of her house for being a “Dichosa Tortillera” after her mother “blamed whiteness infiltrating their community and stripping their youth of Catholicism and

spiritual growth” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 9, ch. 8). Yami has a supportive (mostly white) queer community that she can confide in and she makes a new home amongst friends in a squat that she describes as “sleeping with abandonment and sometimes safe” (ch. 9).

Cristy doesn’t relate to Yami’s situation, however, and prioritizes her own definition of survival. She feels she can’t trust many people, especially white people, and romanticizes queer Latinxs such as her friend Eugene’s gay older brother and her then crush Selene. Regardless of their stance on queerness, the idea of risking the supportive aspects of her family life is too daunting for her to bear. While she believes that her family would never approve of her sexuality, desires, and wild lifestyle, they teach her of the impossibility of safe spaces and the importance of sanctuary. Road writes, “they said it was okay to seek solace- to dismiss qualms back home and embrace retreat. They said it was okay to hate the man and love your identity- your wayward haircut and your defense of pockets in North Miami that were being fucked over by the city commission” (*Indestructible*, ch. 9). Sometimes, she discusses these issues with her family. She tries to help her mother understand her passion for punk shows and her wayward friends, but in the end, they come to the same conclusion. She writes of her mother, “she and I knew that as much [as] we can love any space- ultimate safety was a pipe dream. ‘If home can’t be completely safe,’ she’d say ‘then why should a punk show be?’” (sic; ch. 9).

A two-page illustration features three punks on the floor of a music venue after a show is over, as suggested by the fallen unplugged mic stand on a stage in the background and garbage scattered across the floor (see fig 35). The largest figure is a masculine presenting punk holding a can of whipped cream in one hand and his other

hand up to his mouth looking directly at the viewer and signaling “shhh.” To the left of him lying on the floor are two other punks both with their eyes closed, presumably intoxicated or passed out from excessive drug consumption. One of the figure’s head rests on a bottle of Jameson whiskey and has their hand over their mouth, perhaps having huffed the can of whipped cream to get high. Cristy tries to explain to her mother the safety of punk shows in comparison to the unpredictability of rock concerts during their conversation about safe spaces, yet this scene of drugs and debauchery after a punk show demonstrates her realization of the precarity of any space, including punk spaces.



Fig. 35. Excerpt from *Indestructible* by Cristy C. Road (ch. 8).

Cristy begins to appreciate the connections that she does have with her family rather than the differences and thus to embrace retreat as an alternative to the idealized notion of ultimate safety. She reflects, “It became okay that I couldn’t share my innermost feelings on oral sex, fisting, and Selene with my family. Because we could talk about other things. We could talk about our formative heroes selling out, and about cast

aside neighborhoods. We could talk about dismay and how its sometimes followed by deliverance” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 9). She also begins to see the problematic and oppressive aspects of the so-called “misfit subcultures” that she romanticizes, realizing that “direct solidarity among all underdogs was an often impossible pipe-dream” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 10). The kids into black metal music demonstrate homophobia, fatphobia, and blatant cissexism and misogyny, calling Cristy and her friends “feminazis” and “dykes.” She sees their opposition to political correctness as a demonstration of their white privilege in that “they don’t gotta deal with being called a spic or bitch every day of their life” (ch. 10). Instead, rather than creating alliances with other “misfits,” she understands unity as “about the people who made sense making sense together in the same room- together, safe, and drunk” (ch. 10). The temporary retreat she finds through drugs isn’t enough in itself, but rather the fragmentary moments of joy and safety.

When Cristy learns of the suicide of classmate and fellow punk Jamie, she struggles with the difficulty of finding support and healing from trauma and pain. He never comes to the punk show that he invites her to the week before, and she reflects fondly on how when they parted in the hallway, he tried to plow through a crowd in his wheelchair to break up the school spirit of a homecoming rally. She writes, “Healing is more than spewing out remorse and asking for a shoulder to cry on. Healing is sparse and concealed. Healing is harder to come by than cheap dope, random acquaintances, and fatality” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 10). Then Selene drops out of school after she is raped. All of the times Cristy’s “noes” weren’t respected by men and her experiences with the normalization of sex as an act of control come back to her, and she feels

powerless in the face of death and hopelessness. She sees the idealistic naïveté of feeling invincible.

An illustration spans two pages depicting a graffiti tag that reads “DEAD DUDES CAN’T RAPE” at the intersection of a city street and a boardwalk (see fig. 36). A silhouetted group of kids stands on the boardwalk with silhouettes of palm trees and power lines behind them. The figure to the left stands in a threatening posture with his arm and hand angled above the heads of the other two. The city street on the right side is abandoned, not a person in sight and the gates to businesses shut. The graffiti stands in stark contrast to the potentially dangerous interaction occurring on the boardwalk, demonstrating the tensions between Cristy’s anger and hopelessness in the face of violence and death.



Fig. 36. Excerpt from *Indestructible* by Cristy C. Road (ch. 10).

The precarity of self-love drives her search for strength and power, which she finds in the Screeching Weasel song “Hey Suburbia,” a song she calls her “power suit” (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 11). The two-minute song might be a temporary bout of power,

but it makes her stronger by making her smile. The idealized notion of invincibility shifts to the goal of indestructibility. She declares, “day to day survival becomes a pretty legitimate revolution. And in the words of my power suit – “We won’t end up like you want us to be, but so what ‘cause we’re always gonna be happy, ‘cause we don’t give a shit about tomorrow” (ch. 14).

The year Cristy turns sixteen, she is finally able to love girls and tries to start a punk band. A two-page illustration features two female figures dressed in punk style with rebellious facial expressions in front of a background lined with a palm tree and power lines (see fig. 37). The figure in the foreground has her mouth open, scowling eyes, and her left elbow in her right hand in a menacing posture. The figure to her left is leaned over a car, painting “DON’T TRY ME” on the window. With Cristy’s recent realization of her power and solidarity with women, this image depicts the feelings of female comradery in confronting oppressive patriarchal systems.



Fig. 37. Excerpt from *Indestructible* by Cristy C. Road (ch. 11).

At yet another request for oral sex from classmate Gustavo, Cristy finally stands her ground and says no, with a threat to him and anyone else who dares to talk publicly about her sexual encounters. She describes her newfound strength:

That empowerment swerved its way into me by way of those things I wasn't supposed to be. If bad reputations and fucking in public bathrooms can lead you to self-love, the ability to understand your sexuality, and an ability to not constantly fear being poor or abused, then I carried little regrets . . . I knew the sky was the limit to an indefinite number of mistakes, brilliance, girlfriends, boyfriends, delight, and squander. Success was redefined this time. (Road, *Indestructible*, ch. 15)

By abandoning the romanticizing gesture of invincibility, Cristy instead finds empowerment through indestructibility, through learning from mistakes and finding joy in the present. Solidarity and healing are fragmented, survival is revolutionary, and success is re-imagined as self-love.

Bad Habits: A Love Story

Indestructible, in many ways, can be read as a precursor to her second illustrated novel, *Bad Habits: A Love Story*, which delves into the inner struggles with love, sex, substance abuse, and mental health of queer Latinx protagonist Carmencita Gutiérrez Alonzo, better known as “Car.” This novel moves away from *Indestructible*’s more zine-like style, in that its serif font is typical of more conventional book design versus the monospaced or typewriter font of *Indestructible*, and the illustrations often accompany or share pages with the body text, more characteristic of a graphic novel. Although it is not strictly memoir, *Bad Habits* shares many of the autobiographical qualities and details of Road’s other works, even sharing some of the secondary characters, and mixes them with fiction. Narrated in the first person, *Bad Habits* is roughly organized by months marked

by seasons over the course of more or less two years. The cut-up narrative style, however, distorts the overall sense of time and doesn't ever allow the reader to fully engage with the chaotic experiences of wild intoxicated nights and explicit sexual encounters in the endless dive bars and the gritty streets of New York City that flow into one another. In the style of transgressive writers such as Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Charles Bukowski, Road's novel engages the norms and limits of literary convention such as linearity, format, and style, while subverting normative ways of being and offering biting social commentary.

Cristy Road's positionality challenges the cisheteronormativity of the "transgressive canon," and as such is an important intervention into literary history and conventions. *Bad Habits* also explores the possibility of limits—societal, cultural, limits of imposed categories and normative lifestyles—and embodied experiences as important sites of knowledge production. Foucault's essay "A Preface to Transgression" provides a useful theoretical foundation for the genre and the notion as a whole. He writes:

Transgression does not seek to oppose one thing to another, nor does it achieve its purpose through mockery or by upsetting the solidity of foundations; it does not transform the other side of the mirror, beyond an invisible and uncrossable line, into a glittering expanse. Transgression is neither violence in a divided world (in an ethical world) nor a victory over limits (in a dialectical or revolutionary world); and exactly for this reason, its role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to arise. Transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited

being—affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time. (35)

Bad Habits is in many ways a transgressive novel, with its protagonist and narrator on a journey to break free of dominant narratives surrounding conventional lifestyles through social, sexual, and physical transgressions. The form itself is typical of a transgressive novel in its, at times, nonchronological storylines that blend different times and spaces and its somewhat disjointed connections between anecdotes. Foucault's discussion of transgression is also useful in examining bodily pleasure as, albeit, temporary transcendence and self-love, which illustrates the transgressive limit of language and hermeneutics explored in alternative spaces throughout the novel.

In the opening of *Bad Habits*, we find ourselves on the streets of Brooklyn. Car, like the author herself, leaves her hometown of Miami for NYC to live in “a palace, suffocating beneath the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway” in search of a transformative spiritual experience (Road 9, 38). She remarks on the beauty of old painted signs, the Spanish sounds of her “grandfather’s tongue,” and the precarity of existing on the verge of gentrification in describing her neighborhood. She narrates, “I had ventured to this city of smokestacks and fire escapes in order to find the spiritual enlightenment one can’t get from palm trees” (35). NYC represents the transgressive self as it is pushed to its own limits, exposing the nationalist and capitalist ideologies surrounding development and progress, while also offering seemingly unlimited possibilities.

Foucault asserts that transgression exposes these limits and offers hope for the recovery of the “sacred” in the space beyond interpretation and the infinite possibility for meaning in the limit as it exists with Nietzsche’s dead God. Yet, in pushing towards these

boundaries where there is no longer interpretation reveals that it is in this infinite space of meaning that “madness” exists as an interpretative mode of being. Road’s protagonist struggles with mental illness, suffering from bipolar disorder characterized by long bouts of manic soul-searching and dark periods of depression. She is also a frequent drug user, choosing to self-medicate rather than succumb to the medical institution. The textual narrative in the novel is accompanied by scattered black and white images of drug use: a portrait of Car resembling Road herself smokes a glass pipe with her eyes closed in tranquility, she holds one nostril closed while the other snorts a white powder at eye level with a table, while the text on the opposing page reads “It was normal to be crazy” (see figures 38 and 39; Road, *Bad Habits* 37-8). Car and lover Broc Smith, whom she meets on a “reprieve” from trauma brought on by sexual violence, share the same line of white powder over two side-by-side panels (see figures 40 and 41). Still in their noses, their rolled-up straws touch together as they stare into each other’s eyes, mouths open in drug-induced euphoria, mimicking the positioning of Disney’s Lady and the Tramp in their iconic romantic spaghetti scene.



Fig. 38. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (12).

Fig. 39. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (36).

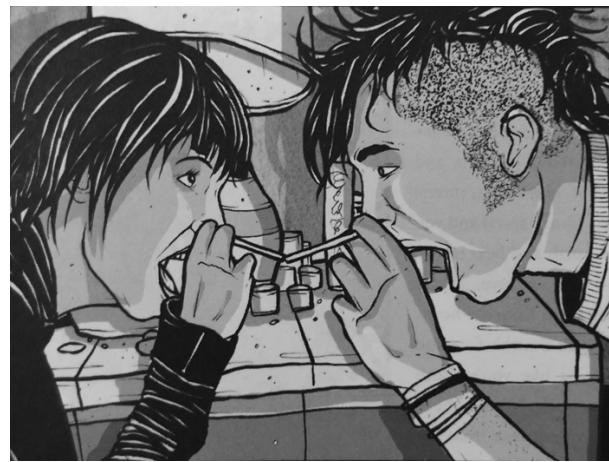


Fig. 40. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (56).

Fig. 41. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (57).

Not only is drug use in *Bad Habits* normalized, intertwined with the protagonist's relationships and day-to-day life, but she defends the validity of her drug-induced experiences and states of mind as important sites of knowledge production. Road writes:

I live in a country where earthly mental enhancers are outlawed, because the crops are owned primarily by people with a heritage other than that of our leaders. Fortunately, I would sometimes soar atop an otherworldly pillar on which the unorthodox was celebrated. In my country, humans are taught to think that no worthwhile knowledge can come from the vices they consume in order to salute

their good bearings—or maybe get over damaging pasts, where behaving badly is the only choice that could alter them. I wanted to find compelling morals in my misfortune, but until now, I’ve just found shit. (12)

Road draws attention to the oppression experienced by the presumably poor, non-white farmers at the hands of the legal institutions and corporate landowners that results in the devaluation of alternative medicines. Road contests the criminalization and demoralization of drug users brought on by the War on Drugs waged by the US government over decades and decenters those mainstream discussions to focus on experiences of trauma and damaging pasts. Despite her utopian hope for finding morality in the unorthodox and in her celebration of alternative knowledges, her experiences don’t reflect such an outlook.

While the details surrounding Car’s sexual assault are never fully revealed in *Bad Habits*, the trauma surrounding the experiences are evident throughout the narrative. In her book, *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), one of the foundational texts of trauma theory, Cathy Caruth provides a framework for reading traumatic experiences in narratives through psychoanalytic and literary theory. She justifies the combination of these fields by explaining that “[i]t is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet” (3). Caruth highlights the temporal impact of this not knowing when she explains, “[T]rauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—it was it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). The impossibility of locating trauma in a specific time and space complicates

linear narratives of survival and healing. She writes, “The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life” (7).

The “endless impact” of trauma manifests in *Bad Habits* through the glimpses of pain that unexpectedly appear during Car’s hedonistic search for physical and psychological pleasure through drugs and sex. Car alludes to past mistreatment in relationships reflecting on her negative body image, excessive drug use as a “safety mechanism” to pull her through the “bitter pasts,”: “any happy fucking dust that pulled me through the more bitter pasts, but pushed me into even more bitter futures. Anything that kept me awake and created a numb reality” (Road 53). Casual sex and bodily pleasure help distract her from “flashes of a damaged past,” giving her “[a] quick reprieve from the tender sores of rape” (56, 58). Images of erotic sexual encounters with diverse partners, satisfying masturbation, and ubiquitous drug consumption depict momentary glimpses of pleasure and escape (see figures 42, 43, and 44). However, the desire to detach from the experiential present and enter into alternative states of being emphasizes the pain that unexpectedly returns to the present from past traumatic experiences. A trauma studies lens, in some ways similar to a queer lens, allows for the possibility of exploring this tension between the known and the unknown inherent in trauma and its non-linear lifelong impact. Elizabeth Freeman’s focus on bodily pleasure in highlighting queer asynchronies is also useful in understanding the complex non-linear relationship between the past and the present in the temporal ruptures resulting from trauma. The silences in the novel and its imagery surrounding Car’s traumatic

experiences speak to the non-linearity, the belatedness, and the tension between knowing and not knowing in the very nature of trauma as the past flashes into the present in, at times, incomprehensible and triggering ways.



Fig. 42. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (79).
Fig. 43. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (118).



Fig. 44. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (137).

The only explicit reference to the protagonist's traumatic past is on New Year's Eve, after an intoxicated Car lies on the carpeted floor in a side room at her local dive bar Dick's and reflects on happiness and love:

[A]ccording to the law, I'm just some bipolar junky who happened to have been sexually assaulted once or twice, and later mind-fucked by some crass romantic I shouldn't have trusted anyway. Perhaps I'm just pulling the abuse card in order to justify my irresponsible lifestyle. . . .

"But a scar is a scar," I thought out loud. I rubbed my eyes, trying to wipe away memory, the way I rubbed my eyes to wake from an out-of-body experience after taking too big a hit off the now-deceased Consuela. (Road, *Bad Habits* 70)

In this moment of excess with her bong Consuela, the flashing memories of traumatic sexual violence are compared to an out-of-body experience brought on by marijuana consumption, mirroring a similar response to trauma depicted by Cruz Gonzáles in *The Spitboy Rule* when she writes about recording vocals for "Ultimate Violations." The notion of "awakening" from both the traumatic flashback and the drug-induced state represent one of the rhetorical strategies described by Caruth. She explains:

The key figures my analysis uncovers and highlights—the figures of "departure," "falling," "burning," or "awakening"—in their insistence, here engender stories that in fact emerge out of the rhetorical potential and the literary resonance of these figures, a literary dimension that cannot be reduced to the thematic content of the text or to what the theory encodes, and that, beyond what we can know or theorize about it, stubbornly persists in bearing witness to some forgotten wound.

(5)

The recurrence of experiences of spiritual awakening in *Bad Habits*, *The Spitboy Rule*, and Alice Bag's *Violence Girl* that transcend a cursory reading of these texts localizes the past trauma experienced by all three artists below the narrative surface. These moments also reflect ruptures in time that resist a temporal order characterized by Freeman as "homogenous empty time," opening up possibilities for living according to discursive regimens dictated by Western modernity and neoliberal capitalist organization, as proposed by Freeman in *Time Binds*. Complicating narrative linearity, the gaps in memory, the silences, and the alternative realms of existence intrinsic to these experiences speak to the lasting impact of trauma and its effects on conforming to normative lifestyles.

Car's search for enlightenment in NYC is guided by bodily pleasure and excess; drugs and sex are revered as larger-than-life forces. While tripping on acid with her friend Spike on an airplane back to New York City from Miami, Car reflects on life, "This is like...my purpose. This is the explanation of my existence. A message from the acid gods saying to continue the fight against the bullshit I typically piss on. [. . .] Throwing shit. We defined throwing shit as 'overthrowing double standards that persist as blockades to keep us from moving forward.' We chose to throw shit" (bracketed ellipsis mine; Road, *Bad Habits* 100). This rejection of normativity and binary categorization through transgressive acts echoes Foucault's assertion that transgression offers hope that the sacred will be recovered or reconstructed in the limit it exposes. Foucault writes that transgression is "profanation in a world which no longer recognizes any positive meaning in the sacred . . . not only the sole manner of discovering the sacred in its unmediated substance, but also a way of recomposing its empty form" ("Preface"

30). By identifying the sacredness in the hallucinogenic substance and experience that leads her to interrogate and defy normative ways of being and identifying, Road draws important connections between transgression, the sacred, and limitless possibilities and potentialities offered by alternative temporalities. The hallucinogenic experience also allows Car to complicate linear narratives of time and space in order to locate the queer relationality of the past in the present, illustrating the hope of a queer utopian future, as theorized by Muñoz.

In *Bad Habits*, Road depicts NYC as the limit in which nationalist and capitalist ideologies surrounding development and progress are exposed, but also as a space of possibility for the sacred represented in the space inhabited by the nightclub, Dust. On a mild night in February, Car and the roommates with whom she shares her home beneath the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, Luis Deperdue and RJ, transformed into her guardian angel Rhonda as per extravagant nights out on the town, get all dressed up to go to Dust where their other roommate, Spike, DJs and throws a weekly party “where outrageous hordes of freaks, queers, sluts, and delinquents coalesced beneath sputtering Day-Glo and sequined wallpaper. Heads thrashed to punk rock and late ‘70s progressive rock as adulthood carried the same sense of aimless rebellion adolescence did” (Road 103). Dust represents a space where Car can embrace excess and debauchery without the restraints of normative labels or rules surrounding social acceptability. She describes:

For most of my life, I sought outrageous variety, where stank armpits could contrast kindly with a pair of stilettos and a full face. As alternative teenagers become alternative adults, their wayward upbringing either supports them through identity transitions or kills their self-assurance. I’d begun to realize punk rock

wasn't always female, let alone gay. And gay nightlife was never gritty enough, and often too binary. But at Dust I felt an inner balance. Refusing to choose between male or female, punk rock or not, the queer, rock 'n' roll Dust . . . spun old punk records, the occasional Caribbean obscurity, Iron Maiden, and some dance remixes. (106)

Road depicts the notions of excess, hedonism, and the pursuit of pleasure as sacred experiences, and Dust offers a space of possibility for exploring and defying the limits of gender, sexuality, bodily pleasure, and subcultural identification often not found in familial structures or dominant society. While at Dust, Car can embrace all categories and none, androgyny and queerness, spirituality and sex, contesting limiting notions of identity and belonging.

The communal level of intoxication and the loud music forces Car and her friends to learn the value of body language and revel in corporal pleasure as they dance and drink “to tonight” (Road, *Bad Habits* 111). An image depicts Car crowdsurfing atop a sea of jumbled limbs and hair, seemingly disconnected from their owners (see fig. 45). Even a tentacle arises out of the chaos. Car rests atop the body parts with a tranquil expression on her face, her hair wild and knees bent as her body is sustained by her torso. Her shadow echoes the comfortable yet free positioning as it rises above her on the brick wall behind her, a wall speckled with stars presumably refracting off of the nightclub's disco ball that encircles her body. Road writes, “A stranger's arms lifted me above the glass tiles, and I tumbled over heads, wigs, hats, and appendages. I knew every word to the fucking song, and I wanted everyone to know that. Aggressively mimicking every drum fill with my fists, I felt the spark of euphoria that is eventually killed by a harsh feeling

once it's over" (108). The bodily pleasure experienced in these sacred moments identifies the transgressive limit as beyond language and hermeneutics, and despite complaining to a friend about someone's "loose hands" during her time in flight, for a short time, she believes in the possibility of love. Acknowledging the imperfection and contradictions of her alternative world, Car embraces Dust as a liminal space that transcends social limits and expectations, where alternative knowledges and experiences are valued, and bodily pleasure is connected to transcendence and self-love, even if for just a moment.



Fig. 45. Excerpt from *Bad Habits* by Cristy C. Road (107).

Spit and Passion

The final illustrated memoir in this section and Cristy Road's most recent literary publication is a graphic novel memoir titled *Spit and Passion*. This coming-of-age story presents an adolescent version of the author-artist negotiating her competing multiple subject positions as a young queer Cuban through her encounter with punk rock through

the group Green Day. Through loosely elaborated and expressive black and white drawings and, at times, lengthy emotional diatribes about pop culture and teenage angst, the graphic novel depicts the young protagonist's psychological evolution through provocative imagery and affective drawings. I will present several scenes from Road's graphic novel memoir *Spit and Passion* in order to shed light on specific resistant practices and demonstrate how she re-signifies specific cultural references to intervene in the "white riot" account of punk and counter dominant homonormative discourses that conform to linear and teleological temporal narratives.

The novel opens with the eleven-year-old protagonist, already feeling marginalized from her female-dominated Cuban family and an outsider among her classmates due to her masculine appearance and her non-heteronormative desires. She searches for an alternative space, and narrates, "Having grown up around salsa and Latin pop, I wanted something foreign, because fuck, I felt foreign – like an alien from gay space" (Road, *Spit and Passion* 33). Early on, she relates her developing sexuality and sense of self with music and pop culture, but it's not until her discovery of nonnormative figures such as queer Queen singer Freddie Mercury and later the liberating discourses of otherness intrinsic to the punk rock subculture and Green Day that the protagonist finds a sense of belonging.

Occupying a body that does not conform to neat categories of gender or sexuality, the narrator utilizes queer performance to defy the idea of fixed identity and to subvert the notion of gender and sexuality as a binary construction. Critic Judith Butler provides important insights on the culturally constructed nature of sex, gender, and desire through her theories on performativity. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of*

Identity (1990), she borrows from Foucault's notion of "regulative discourses"³² in describing the frameworks of intelligibility that dictate the socially permitted categories of gender, sex, and desire by rendering them intelligible or "natural" through disciplinary techniques. To problematize essentialized identity constructs, Butler focuses on drag performance to illustrate how bodily limits between the internal and the external imposed by societal norms and inscribed with histories of oppression can be rendered as constructed.

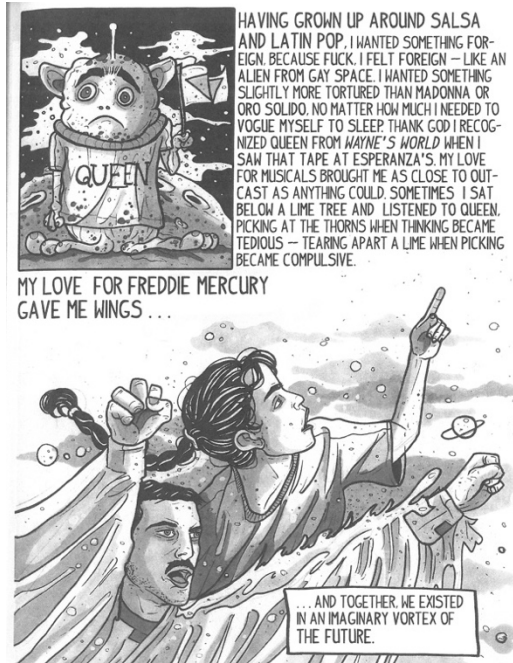
The protagonist of *Spit and Passion* resists gender norms dictated by a cisheteronormative hegemonic structure and embraces fluidity through her identification with androgynous figures and her small resistant performances. She describes herself as having a unibrow, sideburns, and a mustache, wearing masculine clothes, and inciting her own revolutions, using small everyday performances to subvert social expectations regarding gender such as sucking her thumb in public or buying shoes from the boy's section. She identifies as a "creature of no assumed gender or age" and performs "closet murder" around her friends and family, pretending that she is attracted to boys to conceal her homosexual urges (Road 66). In this way, the young Road subverts social expectations of "being a woman" through performance of daily life and the blurring of the lines of essentialist binary gender. In a similar fashion to Butler's reading of drag performance, these small everyday performances resist gender roles through performativity, which through learning, practicing, and presenting, have rendered identitarian categories intelligible or "real."

³² This discussion is found in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975).

The textual narrative that chronicles the young protagonist's journey to self-discovery is complemented by and interdependent of the book's visual representations of self-portraits, portraits of friends and family, pop culture icons including musicians, cartoon characters, and other celebrities, Catholic iconography, and Cuban cultural symbols (see figures 46 and 47). Struggling with how to negotiate conflicting discourses and desires, the young Road reinterprets many of these images through a queer lens. These performative re-readings can be framed as disidentificatory gestures, as theorized by Muñoz as a lens to interpret minoritarian politics and understand how intersectional subject positions interact and affect the social. The method of resistance and survival strategy that he calls disidentification is employed by minority subjects to negotiate a majoritarian public sphere that condemns those that break with the illusion of normativity. Road reads la Virgen de la Caridad as also wanting to break free from the Evangelical herd, Ren and Stimpy as gay, and Green Day as queer punk icons who offer a utopian space of queer subcultural belonging through their imperfect appearances and lyrical references to alternative notions of gender and sexuality.



9



33

Fig. 46. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (9).

Fig. 47. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (33).

As Butler explains in *Gender Trouble*, those who don't conform to normative gender categories are designated by oppressive homophobic voices as dangerous and threatening to the hegemonic social order or labeled as sick and contaminated (375). However, instead of giving in to the silencing and condemnation of the bisexuals, lesbians, and others who defy limiting notions of gender like Road, the protagonist perceives the world of punk rock as an “other” space and reclaims it. Through this inversion and reclamation of her sexual and gender otherness, she embraces alternative epistemologies that offer new understandings of gender, sexuality, beauty standards, and the status quo in general, and which diverge from restricting and authoritarian ideologies. The narrator proclaims it in the following way, “All of a sudden, I could look beyond the older generation's ortho-Catholic socialization and hold tightly, with my dear life, to a

new socialization - the one I created through the words of Green Day” (Road, *Spit and Passion* 54). Beyond the basic notion of fandom or belonging, punk rock and Green Day provide her with a new language, which she uses to construct her own reality and move beyond normative ways of being and thinking. In an image of the protagonist’s bust that accompanies the acceptance and joy she finds in this border identity through the alternative perspectives and newly found queerness, the protagonist has ripped off half of her face to reveal the face and short bleached dreadlocks of Billy Joe Armstrong (see fig. 48). Despite their physical differences, their many similarities—thick black eyebrows, bags under the eyes—depict a closeness that she feels towards Billie Joe through her queer reading of Green Day.



Fig. 48. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (99).

The expressive and, at times, grotesque illustrations in gray scale complement the intense moments of frustration, anguish, arousal, or pure madness that characterize the

protagonist's emotional journey: distorted faces, expressive eyebrows and teeth, and flying eyeballs, falling out or pulled out of their sockets, twisting in knots and dripping liquids. Fluid fills every orifice: the wet and soft interior of the under-eye bags are exposed while her fingers lower them, expressing frustration and confusion about her identity; the brain and heart stay exposed, depicting the age-old conflict between heart and mind (see figures 49 and 50). Furthermore, everyday objects are imbued with intense adolescent sexual desire, and the female reproductive system appears with fists in place of the ovaries as a feminine manifestation of courage or “having balls” (see fig. 51). Finally, her ears literally bleed while she revels in the acceptance and self-love that she finds through the music of Green Day (see fig. 52).



Fig. 49. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (121).

Fig. 50. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (61).



Fig. 51. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (126).

Fig. 52. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (51).

These visual representations of embodied affect come to a climax at the scene that gives name to the novel. Without an ending in view for her journey of ‘finding herself,’ the protagonist evades the anxiety and anguish of being a queer Latinx adolescent trapped between her growing sense of identity and the shackles of her traditional Cuban roots through a daydream. In her fantasy, she is at a Green Day concert with her crush, Alex, enjoying herself at the performance amongst the audience and the satisfaction of having already grown up and come out of the closet. Billie Joe spits into the crowd, and the loogie flies through the air slowly and dramatically, softly falling onto the couple. She narrates, “we reveled and cried among the holy waters of conviction. We drowned beneath all the spit and passion a 12 year old could ever dream of” (Road, *Spit and Passion* 132-133). The accompanying illustrations depict the young couple showering themselves in the saliva, eyes closed, with expressions and gestures that insinuate sexual

gratification and subvert social expectations regarding fluids and permeable body limits (see figures 53 and 54). This scene of spit and passion embodies her vision of queer utopia, a creative community existing outside of the mainstream in which oppressive categories and discourses from dominant society do not exist.



Fig. 53. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (132).

Fig. 54. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (133).

Road's protagonist's journey to self-discovery is complemented by the transformation of her literal and metaphorical closet as a space of self-reflection and sanctuary. Decorating her literal closet is a source of tranquility, but it also becomes a dangerous site of social isolation, cluttered and inundated with water and bugs after a figurative hurricane (see fig. 55). It is in the closet that she negotiates her conflicting subject positions through writing, meditation, and utopian dreaming. She writes, "I was not a *certain way* and I had to do what I could to survive. I wanted to breathe. I wanted to

think in Spanish, bathe in mojo criollo, dream in Cuba, and saturate in my closet” (151). In his book on queer Latino America *Tropics of Desire*, José Quiroga problematizes mainstream narratives in the US of homosexuality as an identity, arguing that the notions of “openness” or “outing” are culturally specific, not “constant, universal, normative ways of being” (15). Instead, he proposes the notion that masking and strategic silences can be liberating acts in destroying the binary opposition between visibility and invisibility. This space beyond interpretation can be conceived as the limit exposed by transgression as theorized by Foucault, which offers infinite possibilities for meaning and a hope for the sacred to be recovered. Road’s memoir concludes with a reflection on her closet which describes it as a sanctuary, an oasis she creates (see figures 56 and 57). She writes:

I liked to see my closet as a safe and alternative universe of us vs. them, and now vs. later. In my closet, the oceans and creatures would coalesce in support of my identity. Sometimes the doorways felt like pillars, the clothing on the racks like tropical foliage, and the ground like the ocean. I rode the currents with my conscious mind and I learned to tuck that mind away if I needed to, although I knew I never wanted to. I learned to not attack myself for this, as I developed a new sense of strength in the oasis I had created. (*Spit and Passion* 155-156)

Road demonstrates an alternative conceptualization of the dominant teleological narratives of homosexuality that lead to a “coming out” moment, instead representing the closet not only as the only way for her multiple positionalities to coexist, but also as a space that gives her strength and hope for queer utopian belonging.



Fig. 55. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (142).

SOMETIMES THE DOORWAYS FELT LIKE PILLARS, THE CLOTHING ON THE RACKS LIKE TROPICAL FOLIAGE, AND THE GROUND LIKE THE OCEAN. I RODE THE CURRENTS WITH MY CONSCIOUS MIND AND I LEARNED TO TUCK THAT MIND AWAY IF I NEEDED TO. ALTHOUGH I KNEW I NEVER WANTED TO, I LEARNED TO NOT ATTACK MYSELF FOR THIS. AS I DEVELOPED A NEW SENSE OF STRENGTH IN THE OASIS I HAD CREATED.

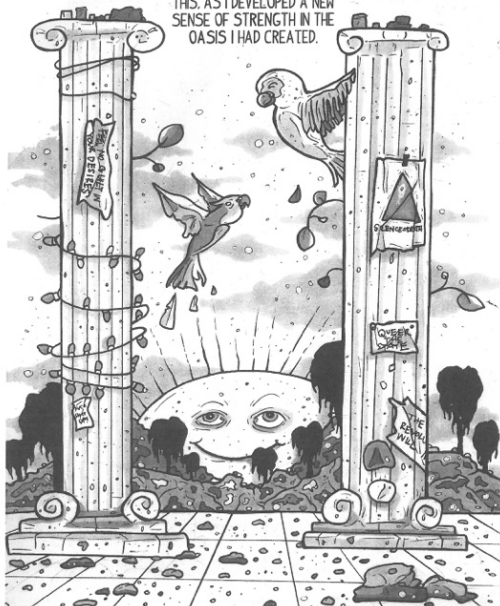


Fig. 57. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (156).

I LIKED TO SEE MY CLOSET AS A SAFE AND ALTERNATE UNIVERSE OF US VS. THEM. AND NOW VS. LATER. IN MY CLOSET, THE OCEANS AND CREATURES WOULD COALESCE IN SUPPORT OF MY IDENTITY.



Fig. 56. Excerpt from *Spit and Passion* by Cristy C. Road (155).

The Next World Tarot

Cristy Road's most recent project diverges from her portraits of queer punks of color and her illustrated and narrative depictions of alternative lifestyles. *The Next World Tarot* (2017) is a 78-card tarot deck that addresses the overarching themes of justice, resilience, accountability, and reclaimed magic, depicting nonnormative figures and anti-colonial belief systems. In line with her other multimedia works the cards portray her desire to dismantle systematic oppressions and pursue justice through revolutionary love. She writes in the introductory booklet to the deck:

The Next World Tarot is an oracle for Revolution. The powers that be have long been plagued by violence that attacks our bodies, our genders, our cultures, our sacred knowledge, and our earth. Everyone deserves an outlet; a reservoir of safety—a comforting warmth in the ribcage—the space surrounding the heart.

Revolution lies in our ability to manifest our truest selves, our ability to see total justice, and in our deepest awareness of the only system greater than us: the galaxy. (4)

The cards are accompanied by a Tarot Reader, also written and illustrated by Cristy Road, which offers detailed interpretations of each card that combine traditional tarot meanings with the perspectives and embodied representations of marginalized subjectivities. Her fellow artists and community members are models for each of the major and minor arcana that make up the 78 cards. The major trumps or arcana and minor arcana in Road's version roughly follow the Rider-Waite tarot deck (1910), one of the Western world's most popular decks used for divination and esoteric purposes, and that is derived from the Order of the Golden Dawn, from 19th-century England. Although tarot

cards can be traced back to 15th-century Italy, then they were used solely for innocuous games of some skill and mostly chance. Amidst late 18th-century France's "Egyptomania" and its infatuation with exotic cultures, esoteric doctrines, and a fervent yearning for a lost Golden Age, tarot acquired esoteric meanings based on an invented Egyptian past as the source of mysterious knowledges. This was a product of the sociocultural and political context of the era, greatly impacted by Napoleon's conquest of Egypt and the failure of the Church to respond effectively, thereby leading to the French Occult Revival, which embraced alternative and esoteric ideologies and practices. Also experiencing its own Occult Revival, 19th century England contributed more contemporary divinatory interpretations to each card under the influence of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Member Arthur Edward Waite designed the first illustrated tarot deck, which went on to become the most popular in history. The advent of the New Age and its associated beliefs and practices during the 1970s in many Western nations shifted tarot divination's purpose from fortune-telling to a tool for healing and self-development. Fascinated by eastern and indigenous religions, the movement's followers used archetypes to borrow and substitute ideas from different cultures into tarot's symbolism (Farley 2-3).

While *The Next World Tarot* certainly has its foundation in these ambiguous histories, there are important differences between Road's version and the Rider-Waite tarot deck. The minor arcana, associated with the more practical trials and tribulations of everyday life, are divided into the traditional four suits that came out of the Golden Dawn tarot era: Cups, Pentacles, Swords, and Wands. The trump cards represent life's spiritual lessons, and their order in Road's deck varies slightly from that of Rider-Waite, with the

Fool as the first card marked “0” in *Next World* while in Rider-Waite it’s the last, number 22. Road transforms the masculine cards the Emperor, the Hierophant, and the Hanged Man, to the Teacher, the Messenger, and Suspension, and Rider-Waite’s the Tower to Road’s Revolution. Each of the major arcana cards in *Next World* also feature an astrological sun sign and its corresponding element and ruling planet along the bottom, and the minor arcana include an associated word on the bottom left and planetary zodiac signs on the bottom right. *Next World* reworks the normativity of the bodies, ages, genders, sexualities, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, and abilities represented in traditional decks to incorporate a wide range of diverse bodies, subjectivities, and experiences. Road also highlights non-Western spiritualities such as indigenous and syncretic Caribbean practices, as well as a varied representation of subcultural belonging, artistic, collective, and activist practices, and spaces, from realistic to utopian to dystopian.

As the meanings of tarot decks rely heavily on their performative interpretation, this section will take the form of a 3-card tarot reading. In the instructions that supplement *Next World*, Road describes the history of rewriting in which she intervenes with her deck to include and encourage diverse ideologies and communities, support variegated spiritualities, and be an available resource that anyone can access, connect, and benefit from. In her detailed recommendations, after “Shuffl[ing] and Start[ing] a Flame,” the reader/viewer is instructed to pull a series of cards to create one of four spreads, both invented and inherited from the past. While she writes that the reader/viewer can work with traditional spreads, such as the Celtic Cross, or a 3 Card Past, Present and Future Spread, she explains how she often reworks the card placements

according to her own perspectives and intentions. Out of the four spreads she outlines as possible options, including the 1 Card Guide, 3 Card Quick Therapy, 10 Card Next World Celtic Cross, and 3 Card Anxiety Spread, I will present a reading of the 3 Card Quick Reality, with the first card placed in the middle representing the “Current Reality,” the second card to the left of and slightly below the first as “Foundation, what brought you here,” and the third card placed to the right of and slightly below the first as “What’s resulting from this reality, or this choice.” The three cards chosen in this spread include: “The High Priestess,” “The King of Pentacles,” and “Justice.” I will begin the analysis by reading the cards separately in conjunction with their descriptions, and then together as they relate to each other.

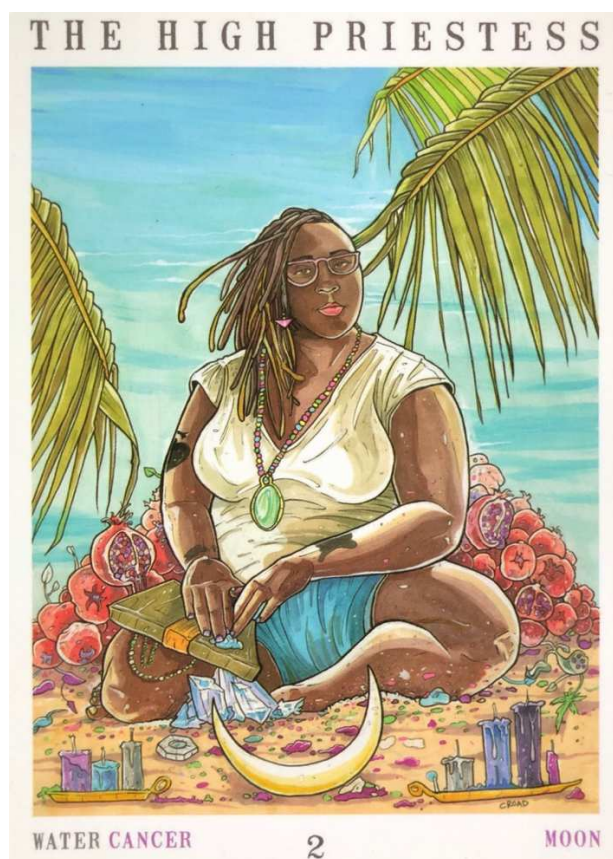


Fig. 58. “The High Priestess” by Cristy C. Road (*The Next World Tarot*, 2017).

As the first card chosen, “The High Priestess” represents the current reality in my spread (see fig. 58). The card features a heavysset woman of color with dreadlocks sitting cross-legged on a tropical beach and engaging in a spiritual practice with crystals and candles. In the popular Rider-Waite deck, the High Priestess represents human wisdom, tying back to figures such as the Egyptian Priestess Isis, ancient snake and bird goddesses, the Greek goddess Persephone, or Eve, before the fall. In *A Cultural History of Tarot: From Entertainment to Esotericism* (2009), Helen Farley provides a detailed contextualized history of the practice of tarot that seeks to clarify the overabundance of popular tarot monographs that propagate ahistorical mythological origins. The card now known as the High Priestess originated from the first period in tarot history, 15th century Italy, then known as the Popess. In the late Medieval and Early Modern times, the Popess, or *la Papessa*, was considered one of four cards that represented spiritual and temporal power alongside the Emperor, Empress, and Pope. One popular legend links the Popess to the deity of a sect of witches outside of Florence, while another to Pope Joan, a woman who dressed as a man and reigned as Pope John Anglicus for over two and a half years. She was eventually dragged and stoned to death when she gave birth to a child during a procession, and her identity was revealed. Farley, however, disputes these stories, positing Sister Maifreda da Pirovano, who won the title of pope among her admirers, the Guglielmites, during the Middle Ages. Her mother, Guglielma, was believed to be the Holy Spirit incarnate that would replace the old corrupt religious establishment and save the Jews, pagans, and Saracens. Sister Maifreda led the new Church as *la Papessa* after her mother’s resurrection and ascension. These cult activities,

considered heretical by the Church, drew the attention of the Inquisition, and Sister Maifreda was sentenced to death and burnt at the stake for heresy (55-57).

Cristy Road's version of the High Priestess stands in direct dialogue with popular representations of the card figure which present a nun dressed in a blue and white habit sitting on a throne with black and white pillars to either side and wearing a triple tiara associated with the office of pope, a scroll in her left hand or in her lap, and a staff with a cross. Road's version wears loose fitting white and blue shirt and shorts that reference the Rider-Waite version's blue and white robes. She also wears pink glasses frames, a long, beaded necklace with a large green gemstone pendant, and beads in her hair. In the lower center of the card, a crescent moon sits at her feet as it does in the Rider-Waite version to symbolize her connection with the divine feminine, her intuition and subconscious mind, and the natural cycles of the moon.

Rider-Waite's High Priestess has a hanging veil behind the figure, embroidered with palms and pomegranates (Waite). The High Priestess of *Next World* sits in front of a pile of pomegranates, two palm leaves and two candle holders on either side in the place of the pillars, adorned with a gemstone necklace and beads in her hair with her hands placed gently on blue crystals atop a wooden board on her lap seemingly absorbing their energy. In the booklet that accompanies *Next World*, Road describes the High Priestess as having sacred powers that were "doubted by colonizers, but revered by her family and the ghosts of her ancestors" (7). By rewriting and intervening into The High Priestess's popular associations with Christianity and Western religious and spiritual practices, the card honors alternative knowledges, from pre-colonial and ancestral traditions, practices, and understandings.

As representative of the “current reality,” Road’s High Priestess is located somewhere between self-doubt and enlightenment. She communicates through intuition and “holds space to decipher whether we need to administer a public outcry or quietly cultivate a long term solution” (*Next World* 7). Road describes the figure as embodying personal power, agency, and awakening by tapping into inner truth as the knowledge behind physical sensations. She writes, “The High Priestess exists between the familiarity of her tropical roots, the abundance and fertility of an organic harvest, and the light of the moon” (7-8). Road also speaks of the impact of toxins in the food and hygiene products consumed in the current commercialized world on the Pineal Gland that releases melatonin, serotonin, and “DMT— the spirit molecule” in the brain, affecting the natural connection that humans have with the “pre-colonial practice of knowing the spirit” (8). As the “current reality,” the High Priestess draws important connections between psychological, physical, and metaphysical states to give the reader/viewer a space to contemplate decisions and solutions to whatever problems the world holds. Bridging non-Western spiritual practices and pre-colonial knowledges, this card offers reflection and empowerment in the present.

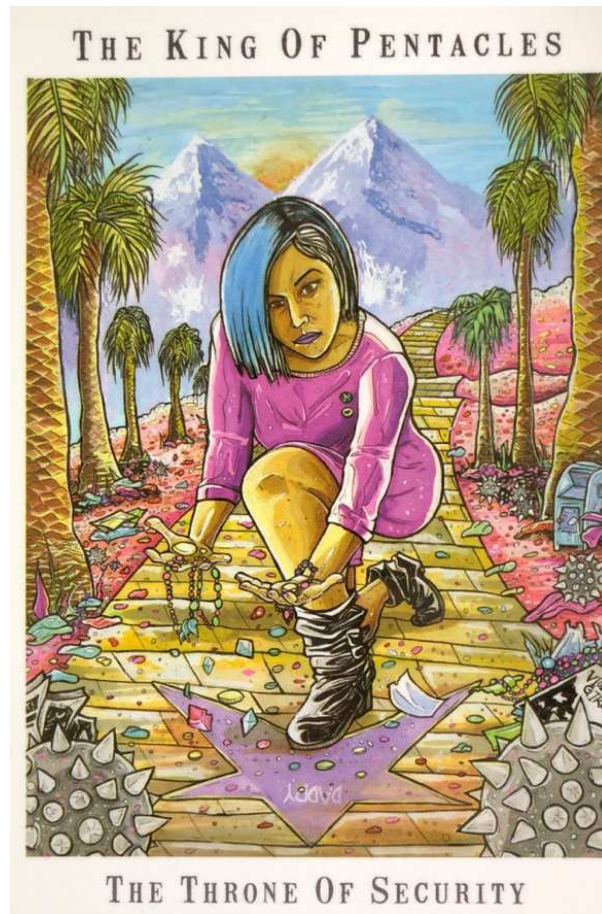


Fig. 59. “The King of Pentacles” by Cristy C. Road (*The Next World Tarot*, 2017).

The second card chosen in my spread, “The King of Pentacles,” features a recognizable Alice Bag, subtitled along the bottom, “The Throne of Security” (see fig. 59). The suite of Pentacles in the Rider-Waite deck covers the material aspects of life including work, business, trade, property, and money; and the King of Pentacles represents the highest amount of material success. Traditionally, the card features a king atop a throne decorated with bull carvings with his castle in the background. He wears a robe adorned with grapes and vines as representative of his abundance, a monarchical scepter in his right hand symbolic of his authoritarian power, and a gold coin engraved with a pentacle in his left to show his material wealth. He is described as courageous, yet

lethargic in tendency, and the pentacle illustrates the governance of the four elements in human nature: earth, water, air, and fire (Waite).

Road's King of Pentacles features the Chicane punk icon in a very different position from that of Rider-Waite. Down on one knee, Alice's palms are face up and filled with multicolored jewels scattered across the yellow brick road lined with palm trees that travels towards the background of picturesque mountains. She has blue hair and purple lipstick and wears a purple dress with two round pinback buttons and black buckled boots. In the bottom corners of the card and along the edge of the pathway are spiked balls found at the end of morning stars, or medieval club-like weapons. The term "morning star" is commonly used to refer to the planet Venus, a symbol for femininity. It is also another name for Lucifer, based on the Latin name for the Morning Star. The bible uses this phrase to refer to Jesus, and it has also been employed in discussing Tlahuizcalpantecuhli, an important Aztec god known for keeping the sky up. Rather than on a golden coin as seen in the Rider-Waite King of Pentacles, Road's version depicts a purple five-pointed star on the road facing Alice, her left boot on its base, and "DADDY" etched inside in white lettering.

As the second card chosen in my spread, the King of Pentacles represents "Foundation, what brought you here," which is an interesting choice considering Alice Bag's crucial role in the history of punk and as a Chicane who promotes QTPOC representation and participation within the punk community. Besides the obvious associations with the foundation of punk and its impact on Cristy Road's life and work, Road's King of Pentacles enters into dynamic dialogues with the Rider-Waite version. By portraying a queer Chicane punk as the King of Pentacles, Road queers a traditionally

masculine card and inserts a history of Latinx resistance and activism into a conventionally authoritarian and materialistic symbol. In the book accompanying *Next World*, Road describes the King of Pentacles as a “triple threat with a heart of gold, strutting shamelessly down the path of resistance. A singer, actress, and mother, the King understands multiple angles of survival— the need to compromise your truth in order to feed yourself, the need for speaking that truth because you’ve cultivated security, and the need to navigate both” (49). Road writes that the King of Pentacles asks you “to forgive yourself for the journey you are on” through survival and finding security, knowing that your intersectional feminist punk ancestors that serve as your foundation such as Alice Bag have paved the path of resistance and have found their own version of abundance: abundance of ideas, of representation, of activism that counters the materialism and authoritarianism of the traditional King of Pentacles card (49). Although she is not portrayed on a literal throne, the subtitle of the card, “The Throne of Security,” along with her humble positioning at the foot of a pentacle that honors her complicated and trauma-ridden relationship with her father positions Alice Bag as the King that asks the reader/viewer to reflect on the ways in which we have embraced survival and “to see those times as the times your internal warrior furthered its trek up your spine and into your third eye: the seat of awareness, protected by the High Priestess; into a fully enlightened, strong powerful force, with the capability to navigate change, silence, and freedom” (50). The foundation laid by the King of Pentacles is a strong base from which to become empowered and gather past genealogies of alternative knowledges in the present.

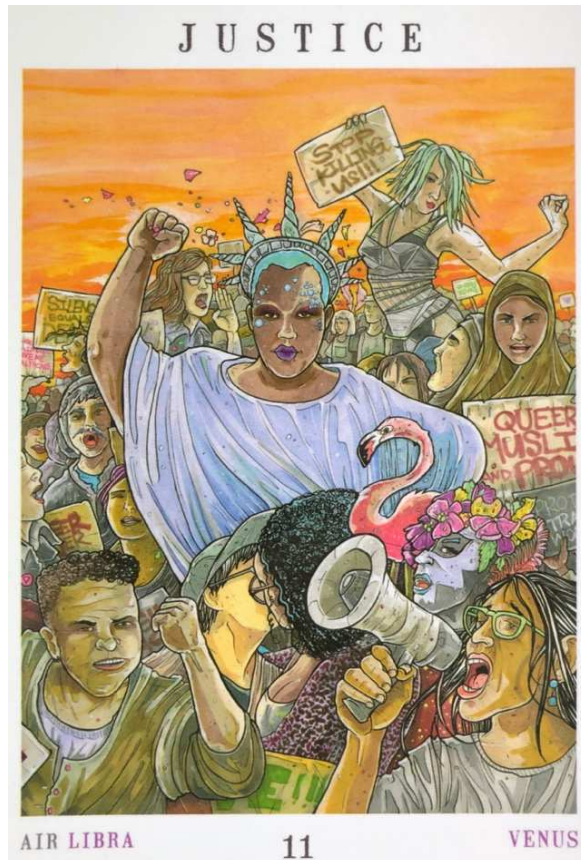


Fig. 60. “Justice” by Cristy C. Road (*The Next World Tarot*, 2017).

The third and final card chosen for my spread is another trump card, “Justice,” representing “What’s resulting from this reality, or this choice” (see fig. 60). Justice is one of the original trump cards from the Italian Visconti-Sforza deck of the 15th century, when tarot was still a game for everyday playing and did not yet obtain its divinatory meanings (Farley 7). Justice, alongside the other trump cards temperance and fortitude, is one of the cardinal virtues as defined by Plato and Aristotle to be present in the tarot deck and represented allegorically. The Justice card traditionally features a woman seated between pillars like the High Priestess in front of a loosely hung purple veil. She wears a loosely fitted red robe with a green mantle, holds a sword in her right hand pointed upwards in a decisive positioning to signify power, holds scales in her left hand to

illustrate logic and impartiality, and wears a crown with a small square on it to portray organized thoughts. One small white shoe peeks out from underneath her robes. The early Italian decks feature a knight brandishing a sword riding a white horse dressed in red and gold (Farley 62-6). Farley explains that “In Plato’s ‘ideal city,’ Justice regulated both the social and personal actions of the citizens, therefore making her the leader of the four Cardinal Virtues” (66). She was known for her clear-sightedness up until modern times, where she is depicted blindfolded outside of public buildings such as courthouses (66).

The Justice card of *Next World* departs from the original and traditional illustrations in ways other than just a different name. Road’s version, also the cover of the deck, features a gender-non conforming POC figure dressed in a loose-fitting purple fabric with their right fist in the air with pink fingernails to symbolize power rather than the sword of the traditional Justice card held by a blond, white woman. A crown, very similar to the blue-green oxidized copper crown found on the Statue of Liberty, adorns their head, drawing connections with historical immigrant struggles in the US. The iconic green color is painted on their face insinuating scales that complement the contoured face and pouty purple lips. The Justice figure is lifted slightly amidst a crowd of protesters with the backdrop of a fiery orange sky. Signs depicting many different intersectional activist struggles are held in the air, from the phrase “SILENCE EQUALS DEATH” associated with ACT UP as a campaign against the AIDS epidemic, to the Black Lives Matter slogan “STOP KILLING US,” and the intersectional feminist message “QUEER, MUSLIM, AND PROUD.” The crowd of demonstrators is a diverse group of people, including a sex worker, a drag queen, and two gender non-conforming people, kissing. Jutting out from between two people on the left side of the Justice figure’s body is a

flamingo, an animal that challenges heteronormativity in the non-human animal kingdom since it is known to have same-sex relationships.

While this card bears little resemblance to the traditional tarot Justice card, Road's version of justice is inclusive of marginalized communities and focuses on attacking injustice and oppression rather than being about balance or localized power. In the *Next World* book, Road writes about how throughout history, "when Justice prevails, communities on the margins are elevated, yet the oppressor strengthens as it fends to maintain power" (16). She proposes renaming it civil disobedience or civil unrest as necessary to ending systemic oppression, and writes that, "Justice is finding a space where you can expect safety in wisdom. Justice is asking once, and being held by the community that surrounds you at that moment. Justice is when you understand historical power structures, you own your mistakes, and you navigate your privilege with awareness and compassion" (18). Rather than reproducing and propagating traditions, Road emphasizes the importance of questioning ancient power structures that challenge Justice and represents visually this bold act of resistance by re-signifying the Justice card and the prominent symbolism of Justice throughout the Western world.

As the third card chosen in my spread, Justice represents "What's resulting from this reality, or this choice," and it is a powerful message that decenters power and seeks to empower and elevate marginalized voices rather than speaking for them. Questioning dominant narratives and freeing oneself from internalized oppressions is at the heart of this card. Road's description ends with "Justice is fabulous and she wants you to present for her revolution," an inclusive call to arms to motivate the masses to engage in critical dialogues and direct action (*Next World* 18).

In viewing these three cards in context, the High Priestess as “current reality,” the King of Pentacles as “Foundation, what brought you here,” and Justice as “What’s resulting from this reality, or this choice,” an interesting and dynamic narrative can be drawn between them. The High Priestess, in honoring alternative knowledges and ancestral traditions, practices, and understandings and tapping into her wisdom, builds on the foundation established by her intersectional and queer feminist punk ancestors and represented by the King of Pentacles. This, in turn, leads to the ideas behind the Justice card, of going beyond awakening and questioning dominant structures and institutions and our internalization of them to engaging in direct action and civil disobedience to make real change in the world. This narrative is not linear, however, because the process of awakening and the building of a critical consciousness is more rhizomatic than teleological. The resulting Justice does not leave ancestral knowledges behind, and spiritual awakening might be brought out of the present during traumatic experiences. This reading of *The Next World*, however, opens up possibilities: possibilities for critical dialogue, decolonization, dismantling patriarchal institutions, decriminalizing black and brown bodies, respecting and learning from alternative histories of resistance, reclaiming magic, and embracing radical love and queer worldmaking in the utopian space of the Next World.

Conclusions

This chapter presented an analysis of the multimedia works of queer Latinx punk artist Cristy C. Road to explore the representation of intersectional and transnational subjectivities and perspectives, the importance of alternative epistemologies, and a

challenge to dominant, exclusive representations of punk. These works include the series *SOBREVIVIR*, her three illustrated memoirs *Indestructible*, *Bad Habits*, and *Spit and Passion*, and *The Next World Tarot*. The three portraits that make up *SOBREVIVIR* set the stage for my discussion of her work by centering non-normative subjectivities, counternarratives, and ideologies to intervene into the dominant “white riot” punk narrative and challenge cisheteronormative patriarchal constructs and notions. Her illustrated memoirs *Indestructible*, *Bad Habits*, and *Spit and Passion* trace their protagonists’ journeys to self-empowerment through punk rock and highlight important strategies of resistance in text and image that lead to questioning, unlearning, and re-signifying of oppressive cultural discourses dictated by neoliberal capitalist and cisheteropatriarchal structures. Lastly, my performative analysis of *The Next World Tarot* demonstrated how her work dialogues with alternative spiritualities and epistemologies by incorporating intersectional, transnational, transgenerational, and queer experiences and traditions. Not mentioned in this chapter are the many important collaborations that Road has participated in with other artists explored in this project. One of such collaborations includes the cover art for Alice Bag’s second memoir, *Pipe Bomb for the Soul*, which will be analyzed in the conclusion of this project. The cover features the bust of the author with a ripped shirt exposing a bomb attached to her rib cage against Cristy Road’s signature dystopic background filled with palm trees and industrial structures. Through these analyses, I have highlighted the important connections drawn between intersectional, transnational, and transgenerational histories of resistance and activism and the importance of punk, spirituality, and collectivity in constructing resistant practices throughout Road’s work, demonstrating her important role in tapping into and

building a collective critical consciousness alongside the other artists honored in this project and many more in a shared vision for self-love, queer worldmaking, and ultimately, Justice.

Chapter V: Conclusion

My revolution happened from the inside out over a prolonged period of time. It started with my visit to Nicaragua and continues every day of my life. There's always a news story, a personal interaction, or a provocative idea that requires me to face the world as a teacher/student, that requires me to step outside my comfort zone and engage in praxis. . . .

I learned . . . what it means to be strong, the value of dialogue, and the importance of fostering and developing critical consciousness. . . .

I leave you with a final thought: the revolution starts within.

Excerpt from *Pipe Bomb for the Soul* by Alice Bag, pp. 106-107.

This project has focused on queer Latinx punk rock as a site for understanding resistant and activist practices in queer Latinx communities in the US from the 1970s to the present. In approaching punk as a subculture characterized by its multimedia cultural production, I have taken an interdisciplinary and intermedial approach to the multimedia works of four queer Latinx punk artists: Alicia "Alice Bag" Armendariz Velásquez, Martín "Crudo" Sorrondeguy, Michelle "Todd" Cruz Gonzáles, and Cristina "Cristy C. Road" Carrera. The different types of work I have analyzed include, life writing, music, documentary, photography, visual art, and performance. I have framed the chosen artists as representative of a larger movement of queer Latinx punk despite their diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, and geographical backgrounds, their varied ties to Latinx cultures and the Spanish language, their different identifications regarding their gender and sexuality, and the range of ways in which they use punk discourses and practices in relation to their formulation of specific strategies of resistance and activism. Through literary and cultural analysis and close readings of their multimedia works, I have demonstrated how these artists represent queer Latinx punk as a movement that breaks

with linearity in time and space, a break that challenges and decenters mainstream hegemonic “white riot” narratives surrounding punk, which have excluded and erased important intersectional, transnational, and transgenerational contributions and perspectives. Furthermore, this project and the artists it highlights emphasize the importance of developing innovative approaches to cultural production and the value of alternative epistemologies. While the forms that their resistant practices take vary, these artists and the movement they represent contribute new insights to our understanding of the development of collective critical consciousness and engagement in social change by bridging art, resistance, contemporary activism, and pedagogy.

There are many overlapping themes that draw important connections between these artists’ contributions to our understanding of resistance and activism. The range of multimedia works by Alice Bag, Martín Crudo, Michelle Cruz Gonzáles and Cristy Road challenge homogenous narratives of punk and hegemonic identity constructions and contest neoliberal capitalist, cisheteronormative, patriarchal, and white supremacist structures and categories. All of their works counter exclusionary accounts of punk, particularly in Martín’s documentary *Beyond the Screams/Más Allá de los Gritos* and Cruz Gonzáles’s memoir *The Spitboy Rule*. As shown in the punk names in the chapter titles, another way in which they resist dominant narratives is through negotiating their diverse intersectional positionalities to imagine and construct their own senses of self. This is exemplified in Alice Bag, Michelle Cruz Gonzáles, and Cristy Road’s memoirs, which foreground self-fashioning and the use of nicknames, as well as in Martín Crudo’s gender bending performances. Alice Bag and Martín Crudo also both engage in complex intermedial dialogues, Alice with diverse music genres and discourses, most powerfully

in her signature “punk-chera” style and in the song and video for “He’s So Sorry”; and Martín through provocative imagery that dialogues with works by Tom of Finland and stereotypical punk and hardcore symbolism in order to destabilize normative constructions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and the nation.

These artists also place Latin America and Latinx in dialogue in new and important ways, promoting cross-cultural hemispheric solidarity and stimulating the building of a collective critical consciousness as a catalyst for social change. This is supported by their valorization of and engagement with alternative epistemologies, genealogies, and sites of knowledge production. Their works draw connections with intersectional and transnational social and artistic movements and other histories of resistant practices of minoritarian communities in the US and transnationally. Through life writing and alternative revisionist archival practices, they rewrite dominant historical and cultural narratives to incorporate marginalized perspectives and experiences that counter official accounts that reproduce oppressive discourses and structures by tapping into intersectional, transnational, and non-Western histories and ideologies of resistance and activism. This is demonstrated, for example, by the influence of Latin American punk bands and political discourses on Martín’s work or Alice Bag’s song and music video for “White Justice.”

Many of these artists’ works represent self-empowerment and transformative experiences through punk and demonstrate the potentiality of punk to stimulate the development of critical consciousness. Martín Crudo expresses this notion in his photo series “Boom Boom Kid – The Knockout, San Francisco.” The out-of-body experiences depicted in *Violence Girl*, *The Spitboy Rule*, and *Bad Habits* demonstrate the impact of

punk on working through traumatic experiences. DIY ideologies and practices related to Chicanx *rasquachismo* are also important to these artists' growing sense of self-empowerment; and they characterize all of these artists' works in different ways, from the production and distribution of their works and the organization of events to aesthetic choices. The black and white Xerox aesthetic of Martín's graphic work and Spitboy's discussions surrounding band imagery exemplify these practices. Such aspects also allow for queer worldmaking and imaginings of queer utopias in the midst of extreme political turmoil and precarity, illustrated by Alice Bag's "Se Cree Joven," Martín Crudo's photograph "Punks in San Luis Potosi, Mexico," and Cristy Road's *The Next World Tarot*.

The transnational, intermedial, and intergenerational collaborations within the wider movement made visible by considering these four artists together map new routes and spaces that break with the linearity in space and time that characterizes canonical punk texts, which have historically and geographically isolated scenes and movements. The work of the artists I have studied establishes connections that transcend both geographical borders and those represented by binary or limiting constructions of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. These collaborations also support the framing of these four artists in the context of a broader movement of queer Latinx punk. One important example is Martín Crudo (or Garlika Stanx) and Alice Bag's side project band "The Shhh," which extends this collaboration to the queer Latinx punks in Maricón Collective who contributed to the production of the music video for "Take," as well as to the visual artist Shizu Saldamando, whose silkscreened, prison-art inspired portraits commemorated the band's opening night event. Another important collaboration between all of the artists

I study is Desafinados, a punk fest and historical exhibition of Latinx Punk in the Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods of Chicago, organized by Martín Crudo to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Los Crudos. The event featured book readings and queer art exhibits in which Alice Bag, Michelle Cruz Gonzáles and Cristy Road participated. In addition to the exhibition's historical focus on the musicians, artists, activists, and neighborhood youth of the 1990s who took action in their community to create alternatives to the violence that was propagated by anti-immigrant settlements, gentrification, and gangs, the event highlighted the importance of local Latinx punk bands, DIY independent record labels and publications, and the formation of collectives such as Unidad de Jovenes Latinos and Black and Brown Punk Show Collective.

As these artists bring punk off the traditional stage and into different spaces and temporalities, we see new and exciting opportunities to gather and exchange ideas, become empowered, create, and stimulate practices of resistance. One important connection between the ways in which these artists achieve such goals is through their engagement with pedagogical practices within a range of diverse institutional relationships. The institutionalization of punk is, in many ways, contradictory, since by definition punk is a space for outcasts who reject normative ways of being and thinking, promotes DIY practices through underground channels and networks, and is characterized by anti-establishment and anti-authoritarian attitudes and ideologies. However, I will briefly present Alice Bag's second memoir titled *Pipe Bomb for the Soul* (2015) to discuss her work studying pedagogical practices among the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the influence of Paulo Freire on her growing passion for education. I focus on this particular text because it details the transformative experiences Alice has during

her travels from being in punk bands to becoming a teacher. The other artists in the project, however, also have institutional and pedagogical affiliations, which is the focus of this conclusion in bridging punk rock, critical consciousness, and social change through pedagogy.

In the conclusion of *Violence Girl* Alice describes the impact of punk on her developing critical consciousness and her growing passion for theories on marginalized groups and perspectives, citing Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) as a text that has been especially inspirational for her. In 2015, Alice Bag self-published her second memoir, *Pipe Bomb for the Soul*, in which she narrates in journal form her experiences living among the Sandinistas during the Contra War in Nicaragua (see fig. 61). The introduction of this diary-style memoir narrates how Alice accidentally falls in love with education after graduating from college with a degree in philosophy while working part time as a teacher's aid to help pay for law school. She abandons that dream to pursue bilingual education, attending an accelerated teaching program and securing an emergency bilingual teaching qualification. She starts teaching at an elementary school where the majority of her students are Spanish-speaking migrants or children of migrants from Central America whose experiences remind her of her own difficult journey learning English in school during which oppressive English-only practices are strictly enforced. After a less-than-successful attempt at organizing a punk benefit concert to aid the victims of the 1985 earthquake in Mexico, Alice sets out to pursue her new dream of making a difference in the world. Believing in the power of her unique positioning to fight for those children who are now her students, she vows to put into practice the pedagogical theories inspired by Freire that shifted her life perspective.

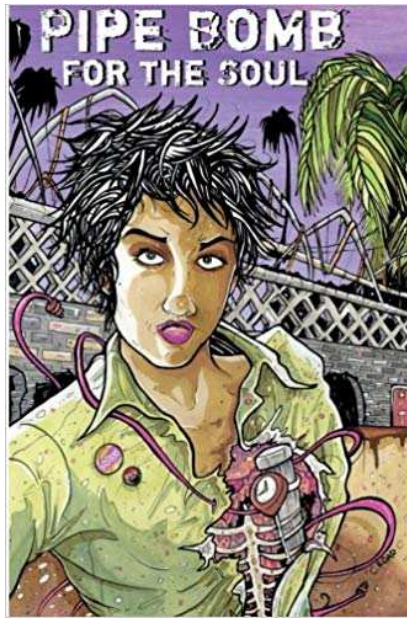


Fig. 61. Cover of *Pipe Bomb for the Soul*, Illustrated by Cristy C. Road (Alice Bag 2015).

Alice relates to Freire's view that education is a tool the dominant class uses to maintain oppressive social and cultural structures because she has experienced herself the wrath of teachers who deem students who question authority as troublemakers and who instead demand that students regurgitate facts or reproduce their own views. In his groundbreaking text, Freire describes traditional education, which he deems "official knowledge," as propagating oppressive attitudes and practices to maintain the status quo. He instead argues for an alternative pedagogical approach that necessitates dialogue as an instrument to free the colonized or oppressed and eventually lead to revolution. In advocating for "the critical intervention of the people in reality through praxis," rather than solely theory or practice, he argues that in:

[t]he pedagogy of the oppressed, which is the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation, . . . those who recognize, or begin to recognize, themselves as oppressed must be among the developers of this pedagogy. No

pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption. (53-4)

Learning of Freire's support of the post-revolutionary government of Nicaragua through a literacy campaign while teaching predominantly Central American students at the height of the Sandinista Revolution, Alice decides to volunteer to work at The Nica School in Nicaragua to immerse herself in these theories and experiences. After convincing her professor to grant her college credit for participating in the program under the condition that she write a journal that reflects on her experiences, and to the dismay of her parents, she sets off to the town of Esteli, Nicaragua, two hours north of Managua. *Pipe Bomb* is the result of that journey.

Alice is placed to live with a Nicaraguan family, an all-female household heavily involved in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary movements in a house that was used as a Sandinista headquarters. She learns valuable cross-cultural lessons about life that challenge her to confront her own sexist, racist, and ethnocentric ideas and US privileges. She questions beauty standards based on Western features, learns of alternative gender roles enacted in a revolutionary society, and experiences first-hand the reality of scarcity and the precarity that comes with living in a warzone. She also witnesses in action the Sandinista Literacy Campaign, which uses language lessons to demonstrate the power of written language to transmit ideas. She meets some of the most respected Sandinista (women) *comandantes*, who defy her notions of strength and femininity. Some of these *comandantes* survived torture and imprisonment, yet they are also the sole caretakers of

their families. Finally, her work with the Sandinista Collective teaches Alice about the difficulty and importance of collaboration and community.

Scattered among the journal entries in *Pipe Bomb* are blocked notes marked by coded icons that insert her adult perspective into her youthful accounts in a way that reflects on the long-term impact of her experiences. The categories are defined in the beginning of the book and include “Fuck This! Wrong thinking, bad ideas,” “Seeds for Germination: Ideas that penetrated my subconscious and later had an impact on my life,” “Upon Reflection: Seeing my actions from a distance has helped me gain a clearer understanding of what was happening in different situations,” and “Fun Size History: A quick overview meant to aid in the understanding of the diary” (Bag 8-9). One noteworthy example is a reflection on the process of Freire’s conscientization that she sees at work in herself through the internalization of new revolutionary ideas and the growing desire to create change. The last journal entry, written after she has returned to the US, on “5/1/86, Thursday PM,” ends on a particularly powerful note. She writes of her uneventful day and feelings of melancholy: “I guess part of it was knowing that it was May Day and that back in Nicaragua everybody would be celebrating their revolution, their freedom, their autonomy. Here, it’s just another work day, except for me – because inside of me there’s a revolution, there’s a permanent change that won’t let me fall back into the stupor. I’m awake” (105).

This short delve into *Pipe Bomb* offers important insights on a key argument that this project proposes: through its promotion of creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, punk rock serves an important catalyst in developing meaningful resistant practices and sparking critical consciousness that leads to impactful social change and

activism. This is exemplified through close reading analyses of the chosen artists' works that emphasize their valorization of alternative epistemologies and sites of knowledge production, their overcoming of trauma and the journey to healing and empowerment, and in their cultural production and performances that defy normative categories constructed and maintained by neoliberal capitalist, cisheteronormative, and white supremacist structures and discourses.

To end looking forward, I'll present one of the major arcana from Cristy Road's *The Next World Tarot* as representative of a possible future direction of this project and of other queer Latinx cultural workers, both of which exist outside of strictly linear notions of time. Whereas in the Rider-Waite deck the fourth card in the major arcana is the Emperor, the corresponding card in *Next World* is one of four that Road re-signifies and renames to be the Teacher (see fig. 62). The Emperor is traditionally representative of the highest leadership, the protector of the Church, and the most exemplary and powerful person in the realm (Farley 54). While the Emperor is typically depicted seated on a throne, the Teacher of *Next World*, sits atop a stack of books. Rather than a globe beneath a religious scepter, in her hand, she holds a copy of *This Bridge Called My Back*, which she actively reads. On the floor in front of the many piles of books, there is a copy of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984). In the bay windows behind her throne of bookstacks, the dystopic sky fades from yellow to orangey-red. The Teacher in *Next World* as Cristy Road's version of the Emperor leads through powerful books that offer the perspectives of women of color feminists rather than hierarchical religious authority. From indoors and atop her books, the important contributions of Third World Feminists such as Anzaldúa, Moraga, and

Lorde as the foundation on which the Teacher sits give her strength and power to face the potential futuristic dystopia depicted outside the windows, whether it be a totalitarian state or an environmental disaster.

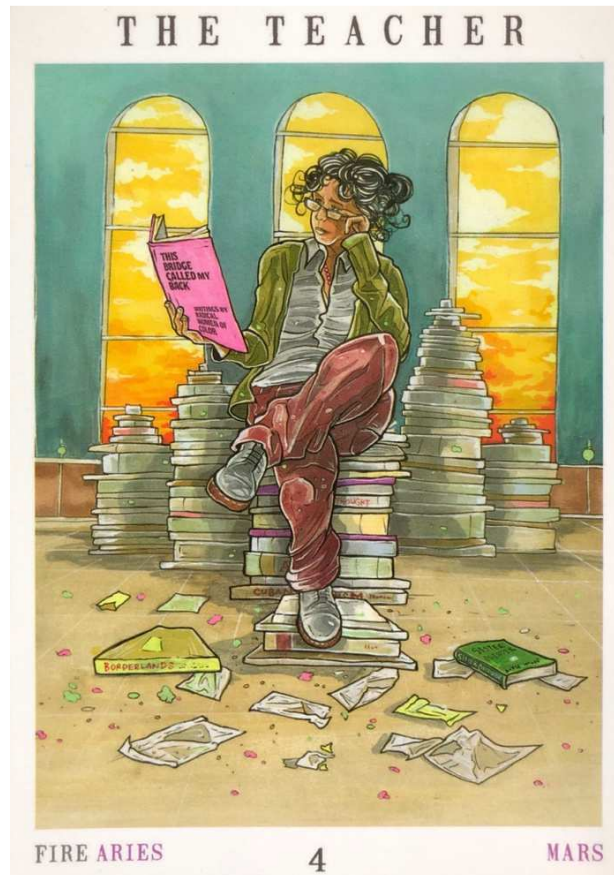


Fig. 62. "The Teacher" by Cristy C. Road (*The Next World Tarot*, 2017).

Third World women of color feminists' notion of the "bridge" or the phenomenon of people of color being relegated to the role of educator and the pedagogical weight that this imposed responsibility brings seemingly stands in opposition to the outlook of the queer Latinx punk artists studied in this project. However, in defining their own genealogies and the so-called "oppressed" or "colonized" as taking the leadership role in the struggle for revolutionary liberation for which Freire argues, the selected artists use their positionality and unique perspectives and talents to educate others in a dialogic

fashion through cultural production and performed praxis. Cristy Road describes the Teacher card, “Through every triumph, every learning experience, and every moment of unwarranted silence or oppression; the Teacher archives the principles that work for herself and for others, creating libraries that help kids learn the definition of *justice*. She asks you to isolate your mind from the noise and shut down the voices that challenge your intellect” (*Next World* 11). Just like the artists in this study, the Teacher creates archives that honor the experiences of QPOC in order to encourage the valorization of one’s own perspective and spread the meaning behind and the possibilities for justice.

These artists go beyond approaching punk education and mentorship as a pedagogical theory; they are actively bringing their powerful ideas into the world to stimulate real and lasting change. Alice Bag has played a central role in the not-for-profit music education and mentorship program in southeast LA, Chicas Rockeras, in which she advocates for open dialogue with the young women and community members to incorporate their visions of a better future. While Martín Crudo has given talks at various universities about the intersections of punk, queerness, and *Latinidad*, his engagement with punk education and activism is more grassroots and underground, as seen in the organization of events and benefits that connect and celebrate queer, POC, and punk communities such as Desafinados. A first-generation high school, college, and MFA graduate, Michelle Cruz Gonzáles is a community college professor who has worked to end reliance on standardized testing on her campus. She also participates in other projects that center marginalized students, acting for example as the faculty advisor for the college’s Puente Project, which connects disadvantaged students to mentorship and counseling programs. Cristy Road has been involved in punk education since 2005,

performing readings, workshops, and lectures across the country, and in spring of 2018 acted as Lehman Brady Professor at Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies. While their relationships with punk have transformed over the years, these queer Latinx punk artists have dedicated their lives to sharing the value of their punk education in many new and innovative ways. As a broader movement, there is no stopping future generations of punk artists, activists, and fans from sharing their intersectional, transnational, collective, and critically radical and creative perspectives and bringing punk "beyond the screams" or "*más allá de los gritos*," off the traditional stage and into other spaces to make real and lasting change.

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